Film QUARTERLY

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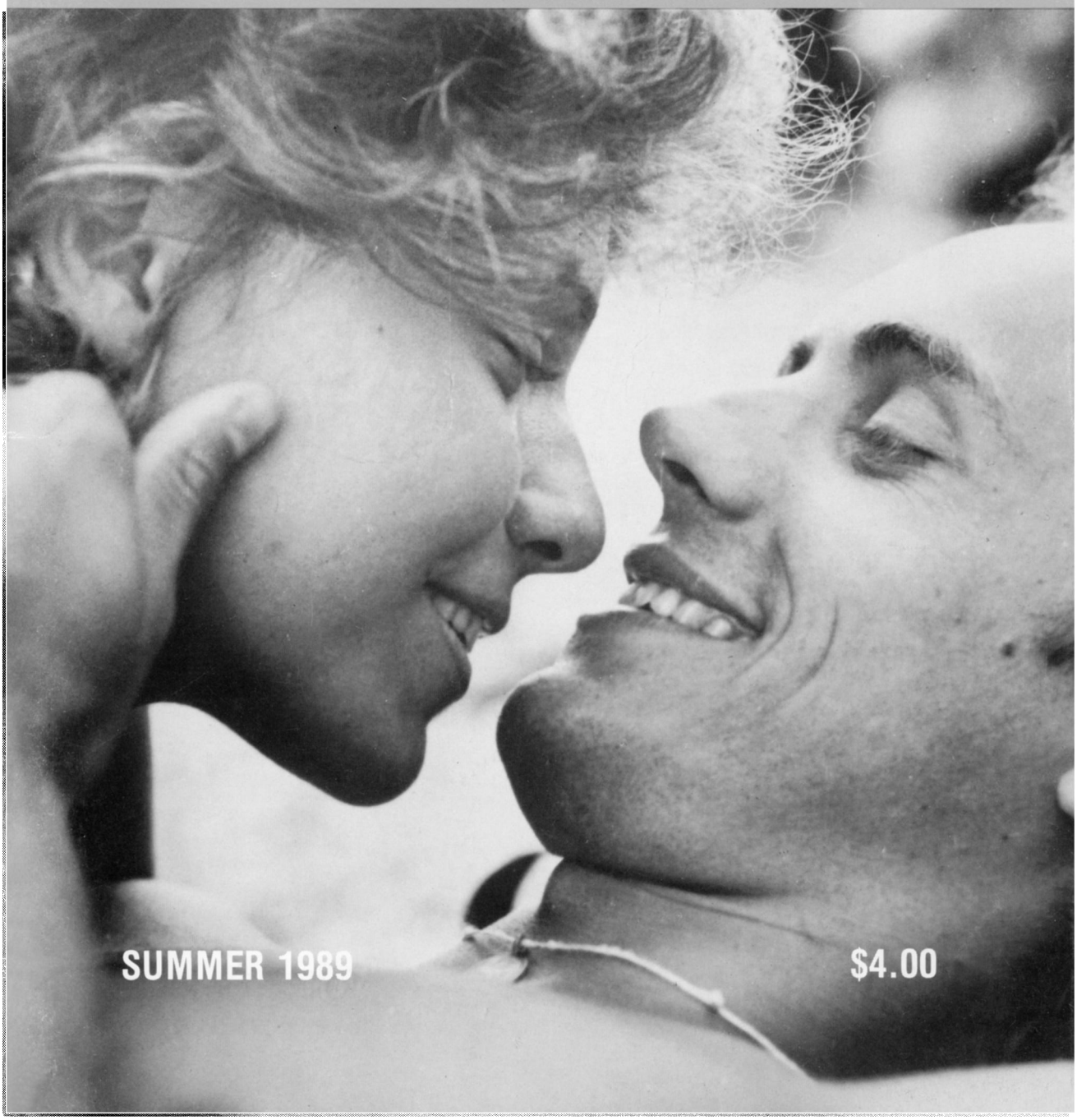

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MARSHA KINDER

Back to the Future in the 80s with Fathers & Sons, Supermen & PeeWees, Gorillas & Toons

Five days before the presidential election, when Arnold Schwarzenegger was campaigning with George Bush in Chicago Heights, he quipped:

> "I saw [Ronald Reagan and George Bush] take over an economy that looked like PeeWee Herman and I saw them turn this economy around to make it look like Superman. . . . I saw them inherit from the Democrats a pipsqueak defense and a foreign policy with training wheels on it, and I saw them give back to our country the Republican muscle that it deserves."

This speech echoed a theme that was introduced by Thomas Kean (Governor of New Jersey) in his keynote address at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans:

> "The Dukakis Democrats will try to talk tough but don't be fooled. They may try to talk like Dirty Harry. But they will still act like PeeWee Herman. . . . It's no wonder the most popular movie in Atlanta during their convention was *Big*—they thought it was a documentary on their philosophy of government."

I want to begin by exploring these references to pop culture in the Republican campaign—allusions that stressed the physical issues of size and age and that helped convert the presidential election into a choice between supermen and peewees, fathers and sons, or simply a matter of casting the right actor (for image and physical type rather than substance) to play the All-American Patriarch.

These pointed comparisons not only positioned the diminutive Dukakis amidst the paradigm of boyish peewees, but also placed Bush within the superman paradigm of powerful political performers—like Ronald Reagan, Clint Eastwood (aka Dirty Harry), and their parodic double Arnold Schwarzenegger (aka Conan the Republican). Schwarzenegger's exaggerated Aryan looks and his heavily Germanic name (even if it doubly denotes "black") call attention to the connotative traces of racism within the concept of Superman. And even after the election, Schwarzenegger continued to figure significantly in the parodic play between these two contrasting paradigms and their possibilities for misidentification and miscasting. The week of the elections Los Angeles was plastered with a pair of billboards advertising a new comedy called *Twins* costarring Schwarzenegger and comedian Danny Devito. One showed the image of the muscular super-hero under the Italian name of Devito, while the other showed the short, swarthy comic under the Germanic name of Schwarzenegger. Nothing was needed except those two mismatched signs because spectators were presumed to know how to distinguish the two paradigms and how to privilege the Aryan superman over the ethnic peewee, as well as the image over the word. It was precisely the American public's competence in reading such visual signs and in privileging image over substance that the Republican campaign so successfully exploited —a competence that was powerfully demonstrated in the two nationally televised debates between Bush and Dukakis where their difference in size proved more significant than their differences in policies.

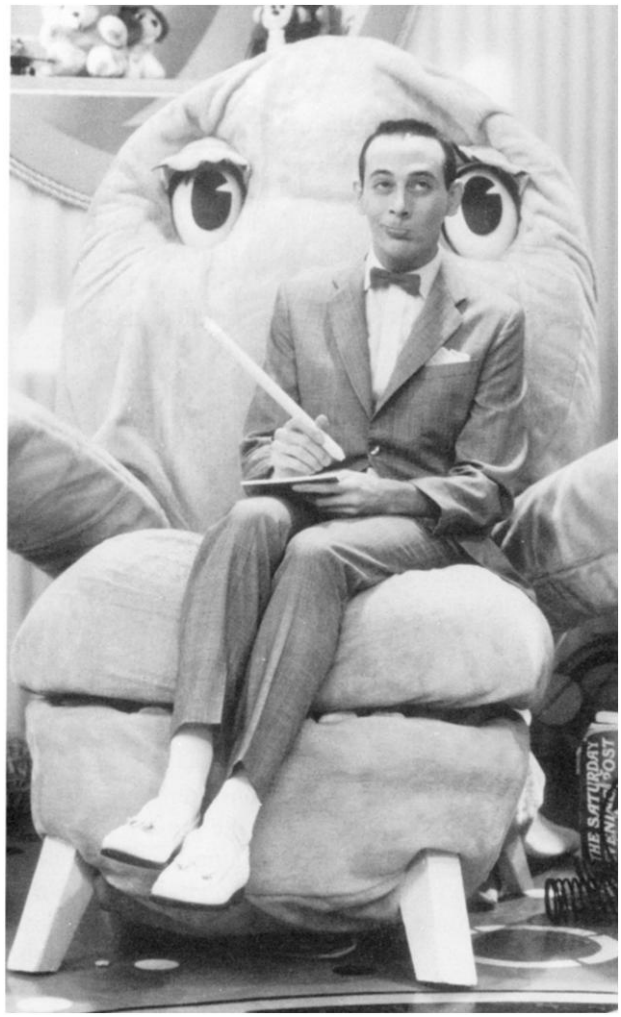
But why such emphasis on PeeWee Herman? I think he's a particularly good choice for naming one of the paradigms because there's a redundancy of meaning both in his image and his name. Even if you have never seen his two feature films or his popular Saturday morning TV show (which is avidly watched by teens and adults as well as by kiddies), his name is expressive in itself. *PeeWee* connotes a runt or underdog—someone small, stunted, regressive or insignificant, particularly in relation to an older sibling or father. And if you have seen him perform, you realize that PeeWee's a little man playing a child, in a suit that's too small for him, evading the moral complicity of the Reagan era just as Günter Grass's Oscar did in

An earlier version of this essay was presented as a public lecture at Occidental College in December 1988.

The Tin Drum during the Third Reich. PeeWee uses electronic video wizardry not for power, but for play. He never aspires to be the father. Within his extended family of anthropomorphized creatures and objects, traditional patriarchal figures are stripped of their power and neutralized, except for the King of Cartoons, who significantly is black and who controls our entry into the history of animation. But it's PeeWee himself who reigns over this postmodern world that challenges or at least evades the patriarchy and that weakens the borderlines of gender, race, age and species which are so essential to the symbolic order.[1] Moreover, there's a "we" in PeeWee, reminding us that this stunted figure surprisingly has a wide mass appeal in the yuppified eighties.

I think the Republicans target PeeWee as a whipping boy or straw man because he raises the threat of a voluntary identification with the one lacking power—the son, the nerd, or the wimp—precisely the bad image that Bush was trying to overcome. During the campaign Bush was almost never figured as the son or inheritor of Reagan. The strategy was to make him look "presidential," which meant "patriarchal." That is, to make him look like a substitute for, or a member of the same paradigm as Reagan. Yet, as we have learned from Saussure and Derrida, any sign is partly defined by its antonym or opposite. So others were used to make Bush look fatherly by contrast—others like the short Dukakis and the young Quayle. (Can you think of a better reason for picking Quayle as a running mate?) Within this construct, Bush himself became a "shifter"—changing from a signifier for a wimpish "son" in relation to Reagan to a signifier for a strong "father" in relation both to Quayle and Dukakis. (In contrast, on the Democratic ticket little Dukakis played the successful son of poor Greek immigrants to the tall, experienced, fatherly figure of Bentsen.) Bush was played as the good father, warmly embracing his hispanic grandchildren, persistently defending the youthful blunders of his juvenile running mate, and self-righteously chiding his peewee challenger with the "L" word.

Of course, the unempowered are not limited to the male gender. PeeWee's last name is *Herman*, which evokes androgyny by referring to both genders and by implying the subordination of the male. His image is also androgynous,



PEEWEE'S PLAYHOUSE

particularly in contrast to hypermasculine bodybuilders like Schwarzenegger and Rambo. Yet the irony is that the very hyper nature of their constructed masculinity positions these supermen, like women on movie screens and billboards, as objects of spectacle for the erotic gaze of spectators. When carried over to the election, this strategy implied that the eroticization of the image should be applied not to the aspiring first ladies (where a young Kitty Dukakis might fare better than a mature Barbara Bush), but to the candidates themselves (where Bush and Quayle might look more traditionally "glamorous" than the ironic role reversal of Dukakis and Bentsen). The wives of both candidates played a minor role in this campaign. After the national conventions, they were both left on the margins, along with Jesse Jackson, and along with all substantive issues regarding gender, race, and class. Only the opposing pairs of fathers and sons held center stage.

In this essay, I want to explore this focus on reversible fathers and sons as a locus of power, not only in the presidential election, but also in popular films of the eighties. My analysis assumes a symbiotic relationship between politics and pop culture. Louis Althusser has argued that under feudalism the church and the family were the two most powerful Ideological State Apparatuses—i.e., social apparatuses that transmit and reproduce the dominant ideology, not through violent repression like the army or police, but primarily through ideology itself. Under capitalism, he maintains, the church was replaced by education, which then worked with the family as the most effective pair of ISAs. It now seems fairly apparent in our present stage of post-industrial consumer capitalism that the role of education has been taken over by popular culture, especially by television and its dominating discourse of advertising, primarily because the TV set is situated in the home where it can start constructing consuming subjects and positioning them within the market economy even before they acquire language and before they go to school. Pop culture has even become the stronger member of the pair, for American families are moving dramatically away from the patriarchal model, with increasing numbers of single-parent households, mostly headed by women. Part of the ideological project of the right in the eighties—one that is reflected in pop culture as well as in the recent presidential election—is the restoration of the family to its former status as a strong Ideological State Apparatus and the reinstatement of the father within this patriarchal stronghold. Hence, the focus on fathers and sons and the further marginalization of the female.

The focus on fathers and sons has also been reproduced by the oedipal myth, which, as one of the master narratives of Western culture, has long been a powerful vehicle for patriarchal ideology. From a post-structuralist perspective (i.e., one bringing together semiotics, psychoanalysis, and Marxism), the oedipal myth is the primary means of defining the incest taboo in Western culture—the cultural taboo on which, according to Lévi-Strauss, all other laws are propped. In Freudian theory, it's the repressive force that first shapes the unconscious and helps generate the preconscious and the superego. In the Lacanian model, it's the vehicle by which the individual is transformed into a gendered subject and positioned within the symbolic order which is ruled by the Name of the Father. It's important to note which elements are stressed and which repressed in the various versions of this myth—not only in Sophocles's play or in the recent pop culture variations, but also in the various theoretical accounts. For Freud, the myth is based on a combination of two typical dreams—killing the father and sleeping with the mother—both of which assume the son as dreamer. Feminists have objected to the subordination of the female as merely an object of exchange between father and son (like Jocasta, the mother/wife) or as an obstacle for the male hero to overcome (like the Sphinx, that creature who's half woman, half monster, and who sits atop PeeWee Herman's Playhouse). In her most recent work, feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey has pointed out how the crimes of the father have been suppressed from the Oedipus myth. Most versions fail to mention that Laius, along with Pelops, was the founder of pederasty and in some accounts is even alleged to have kidnapped and seduced the son of Pelops.[2] Not only does the oedipal narrative of Sophocles, Freud, Lévi-Strauss, and Lacan subordinate women to men, but it also suppresses a homosexual backstory.

The Triumphant Oedipal Comedy of Age Reversal

The cluster of films from the eighties that deals most blatantly with this dynamic is the triumphant oedipal comedy of age reversal where a father and son change places, but without any harm coming to the patriarch. In fact, the reversal enables the son to restore or enhance the father's potency in his sex life and business, and hence ensure the future value of his own patrimonial legacy. Like a pastoral of the eighties, these films address America's economic and moral decline and our current sense of powerlessness by regressing to a personal past. They take us back not to the western frontier (where both the lone killer and the questioning of progress are now politically problematic) but to the onset of puberty where the oedipal conflict begins to be resolved and where we can still affirm faith in the future. The troubling world of politics is displaced onto the domestic worlds of family and business. As examples of this cluster, I would cite *Back to the Future* (1985), *Vice Versa* (1988), *Like Father, Like Son* (1987), and *Big* (1988).

VICE VERSA: *Father and son after changing bodies*

Back to the Future focuses on restoring a bright future to an American family that is threatened by financial, emotional, and moral ruin. These problems are blamed primarily on the weakness of the father. Through the scientific wizardry of the uncle, who functions both as a *deus ex machina* and as an allegorical Uncle Sam, the enterprising son (played by Michael J. Fox, who has come to specialize in this role) is projected back into the past where he can reverse the oedipal narrative. That is, he can arouse the erotic desire of his mother and successfully displace it onto the young father, who now, through the counsel and intervention of the wise son, becomes worthy of her love. Like George Bush, a wimp is miraculously transformed into a strong patriarch capable of regaining his leadership over the American family and restoring its faith in progress. In this optimistic rewriting of the oedipal narrative, the precisely timed meeting with the uncle in the town square (which is essential to get the boy back to the future in time to save the uncle's life) substitutes for the ill-fated meeting between Oedipus and his father, expanded vision substitutes for blindness, and the saving of the patriarch substitutes for patricide. The only thing the son has to sacrifice is incest with the mother, and he's more than willing to transfer his oedipal desire to a girl of his own age—partly because in this version of the oedipal story the woman's role is even more trivial than usual. What counts is the interchangeability of father and son within the patriarchal order that empowers them both.

In *Vice Versa* a father and son exchange places through the intervention of magic, not science. This time the father is a control freak—compulsively neat and out of touch with his feelings and his estranged wife and son. As a successful buyer for a major department store, he pillages the Third World for cheap novelties and then sells them at high prices as trendy luxuries. At a time when our balance of payments have been reversed, when we've become a great debtor nation, when other nations are buying up our land (conditions stressed by Dukakis and totally denied by Bush and Reagan), the father's imperialist project seems reassuring—even if he fails to understand what kinds of power reversals are at stake. Fortunately, the reversal with his son enables him to get back in touch with his feelings. Instead of sleeping with the woman his father loves, the son leads his father to propose marriage, thereby avoiding incestuous transgression and acquiring a new oedipalized mother. The boy's real mother remains a marginalized figure of mockery, certainly no object of erotic desire for father or son. The boy's project is how to win back his father through identification and how to replace his bossy mother with a more desirable woman the way his father already has. Thus, father and son are figured as collaborators in improving America's economic position in world markets and in restoring the patriarchal family. At the end of the film, the villainous man and woman who have been trying to get control of the magic become victims of the same reversal, but this time it's a reversal in

gender, which is treated as an object of ridicule (like the bossy mother) in a film reaffirming the patriarchy. It's as if gender and sexuality are merely comic distractions from the really important issue—the business of fathers and sons.

Like Father, Like Son is the version that is most exclusively focused on fathers and sons. This time a magic potion of an Indian medicine man causes a brain transplant between a widowed heart surgeon (played by Dudley Moore) and his teenage son. Instead of enhancing each other's powers of performance, the reversal leads them to mess up each other's chances of becoming hospital chief of staff and star sprinter on the high-school track team. It also prevents each of them from making it with the desirable female in their respective lives. But these little setbacks prove to be of no significance whatsoever, merely opportunities for laughs. The heart of the matter is the enhanced closeness and identification between father and son.

Big, the most recent block-buster in the cluster, offers the clearest demonstration of how one can profit both emotionally and economically from the blurring of boundaries between father and son. Directed by Penny Marshall, the film pays a lot more attention to how the woman can profit as well. Yet it ultimately conveys the regressive message of "post-feminism" that women should get back in touch with play and become less focused on career. The relationship between the career woman and manchild combines eroticism and maternal nurturing in a positive loving way. They do sleep together, there is displaced oedipal transgression, yet it's only a temporary phase that they have to abandon. And such transgression is possible only because the boy doesn't actually replace his own father; he merely wears his father's clothes. The site of oedipal transgression is displaced from the family to business. He is hired at a toy company where he is instantaneously befriended by the boss, who recognizes his profitable ability to think like a child and bring out the child in others. The delightful scene that dramatizes their positive identification (where overgrown boy and childlike boss dance out a duet on a giant keyboard) has already been cannibalized by television. (A commercial for "Footnotes" —a toy keyboard played with your feet—opens with the sudden transformation of an ordinary

BIG: *Tom Hanks's 12-year-old idea of a tux dismays grown-up Elizabeth Perkins*

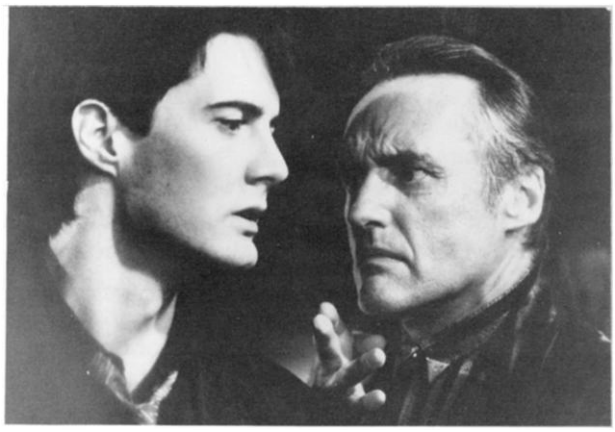
adult into a sophisticated child.) Since the boss in *Big* is so sympathetic, it's the ambitious yuppie (played by William Heard) who's the boy's arch rival both in love and business. Hence, the father is divided into three figures; the mother into two. The son, despite his growth, never gives up being the son, but is merely empowered in the joint worlds of business and desire. The film's great optimistic appeal is that one can retain childlike innocence and still achieve erotic and economic power, without harming the father. Only the mother figures feel pain and, like their pleasure, it's only temporary. The subversive point is that it's identification with the child, rather than the father, which brings real pleasure and growth.

We might recall that *Big* was the film Thomas Kean linked with the Democratic philosophy of government, along with PeeWee Herman. Though Kean was just playing with the title, the film does share with PeeWee the celebration of the child, not as an interchangeable substitute for the father as in the other films in this cluster, but as an alternative to patriarchal values and one which is available to both genders. Yet, whereas in *Big* this alternative to patriarchy is only a passing phase, for the postmodern PeeWee it is maintained in a weekly series, across the boundaries of TV and movies, live action and animation, and ideologically across the registers, not only of gender, but also of race and species. Nevertheless, it's significant that the two most successful films in the cluster, *Back* and *Big*, both center on the acceleration of the precocious son rather than on the regression of the stunted father.

The Satiric Oedipal Nightmare

An opposing cluster of films, seeming to challenge and mock the complacent optimism

The oversize piano scene in BIG.



The son's immersion in pain: BLUE VELVET

of the first category, is the satiric oedipal nightmare. The three works I would cite here are *Blue Velvet* (1986), *The Singing Detective* (1986), and *Track 29* (1988). Significantly, all three were made by outsiders: British writer Dennis Potter wrote both *The Singing Detective* (a mini-series done for the BBC) and *Track 29* (the latest film directed by Nicolas Roeg); though David Lynch, the writer-director of *Blue Velvet*, is American, he first drew attention on the margins with his cult film *Eraserhead*, which deals with the same issues as *Blue Velvet* but in a far more radical form. While all three works speak the dominant language of Hollywood (not only English, but also the language of classical genres), they all use excess to expose and subvert the ideology such language normally transmits. Since all three are highly complex works, I'm not going to attempt to give individual analyses here, but merely sketch very briefly the pattern they share and how it works in opposition to the first cluster of triumphant oedipal comedies.

All three works present a regressive journey back to an idyllic site from the past (the English countryside, small-town America, the 1950s), yet what the son finds in the oedipal conflicts of childhood is certainly not innocence or the possibility of an easy loving identification with the father, but rather an irreversible immersion in evil, humiliation, and pain. No one escapes complicity in these vile oedipal crimes. Certainly not the corrupt patriarchal institutions (the law, church, government, and medical establishments); nor the crazy, whorish mothers; nor the infantilized, sadomasochistic sons. The incestuous desire between mother figure and son is much stronger in these films than in the other cluster, and it leads to a weakening of the boundaries between them as they move through shifting oppositions and alliances (particularly with respect to the father) and through ambiguous acts and fantasies structured around sadistic voyeurism, masochistic dependency, murder, and suicide. Although these films are quite violent, they are also wildly funny. Suffused with black humor, they build on a postmodern form of parody that mixes several genres: melodrama, *film noir*, and the who-dun-it in *Blue Velvet*; horror film, melodrama, and *noir* in *Track 29*; the musical, *noir*, and the spy thriller in *The Singing Detective*. The oedipal subtext in these films is blatant. They start from the poststructuralist premise that the oedipal master narrative is so central because it delineates the way desire is structured and repressed, how subjects are gendered and positioned within the symbolic order. Unlike the other films, they do not see the restoration of the patriarchal family as the answer to renewed power, but rather see the family as the site of greatest entrapment, as still the most repressive Ideological State Apparatus. They try to use pop culture, not to support the ideological project of the family, but to expose its ideological operations.

The Framing Mediation of Roger Rabbit

These two oppositional clusters find some form of mediation in another recent blockbuster, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* (1988)—a film that breaks with conventional Hollywood cinema by forcing us to consider who constructs and juxtaposes these conflicting modes of cinematic representation. In combining the peewee genre of animated cartoons with the dark oedipal genre of *noir*, the film takes us back simultaneously to an earlier stage of our culture that we then thought was corrupt but which now looks innocent in compárison with the eighties, and to an earlier stage of life which we

thought was safe and innocent but which now appears ominous.

We are presented with two male protagonists —the animated Roger Rabbit and the brilliant Bob Hoskins as Eddie Valiant, who both function as son figures. Both are attracted to the same *noir*ish femme fatale, the voluptuous Jessica whose otherness is doubled for both heroes (since she's a human, not a rabbit, and a toon rather than live action). Yet when she reflexively quips, "I'm not bad, I'm just drawn that way," she calls attention to the problems of female representation, not only in cartoons and *noir*, but in all genres and styles within patriarchal culture. The two heroes struggle against the same common enemy, Judge Doom. This villainous patriarch is played by Christopher Lloyd, the same actor who was the avuncular scientist in *Back to the Future* and the adulterous husband obsessed with trains and spanking in *Track 29*. Although *Roger Rabbit* was directed by Robert Zemeckis, who wrote and directed *Back to the Future*, the former has a much darker vision than his oedipal comedy for the mixture of modes destroys the protective insularity of both genres and therefore makes their respective forms of violence far more threatening. Normally cartoons give children a feeling of mastery over violence, for the resilient little victims always bounce back for more and the action always takes place in a world that is clearly distinguished from the child's own space. Perhaps that's why preschoolers are frequently terrified to encounter "live" representations of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck at Disneyland, for the reassuring boundaries suddenly dissolve.

Roger Rabbit begins within a cartoon, but the acceleration and intensification of the violence soon jangle the nerves even of adult spectators. And when live-action figures invade this world of animated violence, the spectator's sense of mastery is totally destroyed, replaced by a sense of paranoia in the face of an all-pervasive danger that is characteristic of *noir*. Thus, when an unknown toon drops a piano on Eddie's brother Teddy in Toon Town, it's no Laurel and Hardy routine, no Henny Penny, but a cold-blooded murder that demands revenge. When earlier Disney films had combined live action with animation, such as *The Three Caballeros*, *Song of the South*, and *Mary Poppins*, the focus of the mix was always song and dance, not violence. Violence is also avoided in the popular TV series that combine the two—like *PeeWee's Playhouse* and *Muppet Babies*, whose characters regress to an earlier age and where the juxtaposition is frequently used to train peewee spectators how to read and identify with popular genres in cinema and commercial TV. But in *Roger Rabbit* the parodic juxtaposition defamiliarizes and exaggerates both genres, intensifying the anarchic violence of cartoons and the pervasive corruption of *noir*, jolting them out of their encapsulation that normally desensitizes spectators to their extremes, a dynamic that also operates in the satiric oedipal nightmares. Despite *Roger Rabbit*'s happy ending, the animated frenzy lingers on, suggesting that neither cartoons nor *noir* will ever be the same. Their connotations have been contaminated, the way Kubrick contaminated *Singing' in the Rain* with rape and murder in *A Clockwork Orange*.

Roger Rabbit also contains a subversive image of age reversal, a parodic conflation of father and son embodied in Baby Herman, especially when he quips, "I've got a 50-year-old lust and a 3-year-old dinky." Usually getting the biggest laugh from the audience, this line is not lost on peewee spectators—at least, it was duly noted by my five-year-old son. Despite his popularity with pre-schoolers, this infantilized phallic figure suggests a grotesque parody of PeeWee Herman, who himself is halfway into kiddie drag and sometimes passes as a muppet or toon. Baby Herman goes all the way—all the way back to the future. Yet the result is not the gaining of a playful, resilient mastery as in the comic oedipal comedies, but getting stuck and stunted in a painful frustrating trap, as in the satiric oedipal nightmares.

The Quest for the Female

But where is the woman in this power construction of reversible fathers and sons? So far, she figures merely as the object of oedipal desire who is more fully developed in *Big*, but who is ultimately ushered back into a traditional role. Her status as object of representation is explicitly acknowledged in *Roger Rabbit* and vividly demonstrated in *Blue Velvet*, *Track 29*, and *The Singing Detective*. But she never controls the narrative in any of these oedipal plots.

To explore how women function in this eighties subgenre of pastoral regression, one can ex-

amine *Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986), which belongs to the first cluster with *Back to the Future* but with a significant difference—a female protagonist; and *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988), which, like the Tarzan remakes so popular in the eighties, takes its protagonist back on a more traditional journey, not to a personal past of age reversals, but to the lost innocence of endangered species.

Peggy Sue Got Married

When a woman goes back to her adolescence, how significant that the key issue should be not her relationship with her mother, or even her father (as it was for the male protagonists in this cluster), but rather her relationship with prospective husbands. There was an earlier Disney film that did explore a role reversal between a mother and daughter, a film that predated the comic oedipal films I have described. Yet unlike *Peggy Sue*, *Freaky Friday* (1976) failed to capture the popular imagination and was a commercial and critical flop.

What triggers the journey in *Peggy Sue* is neither science nor magic, but an injury acquired out of feelings of anxiety—the embarrassing situation of being a divorced woman at a high-school reunion and having to acknowledge the failure of a bad marriage. This embarrassment is made all the more intense by having been so popular as a teenager and having had so many great expectations—not about career, but about marriage and motherhood. Peggy Sue's backward journey is oneiric—like Dorothy's vision in *Wizard of Oz*. It's something that happens to her as a passive agent, not something that she actively pursues (like the Tom Hanks character in *Big* or the Michael J. Fox character in *Back to the Future*). One could argue that Peggy Sue was seeking out the past by going to the reunion, but this is structured as part of the social field; the high-school reunion is a well-known institution.

Presumably the question is, if she could do it all over again, would she make a different or better choice, either choosing someone else to marry or choosing not to marry at all? Very quickly we see that her alternative object of desire, the class bohemian and incipient beatnik, who may have been appealing in the fifties, now looks terribly naive in the eighties. Her only other alternative is the clever little nerd who turned out to be financially successful, but would this peewee have given her emotional fulfillment? There's little consideration of her own potential as a mature woman with a career outside of marriage. The existence of her daughter makes it clear to her that she can't really question her choice of marriage, because it would be like aborting her child. Motherhood prevents her from making any improvement at all—except for a change in attitude, a calmer acceptance of her subordinate position within the patriarchy. So once again we're left with the regressive resolution of post-feminism.

Gorillas in the Mist

This film obviously offers much greater possibilities for women to make a difference. When British director Michael Apted came to USC with this film, he spoke quite intelligently of his attempt to tone down Dian Fossey's neurotic side, which is far more extreme in the book on which the film is based. He didn't want to risk having the story dismissed merely as a tale about a woman who violated the position of women under patriarchy and went crazy as a consequence. Instead, he wanted her to emerge as an heroic figure who succeeded in saving the mountain gorilla. Thus, the project was conceived as consciously "liberal" on two registers: gender (the representation of an actual woman capable of meaningful political action even at the cost of her own life) and ecology (the need to get all governments to help save endangered species and to be willing to sacrifice short-term economic interest for long-term survival of our planet and its species). In an effort to advance the discourse on gender, he cast Sigourney Weaver, who had already been successfully empowered in *Alien*, parts 1 and 2. Apted told the story of how she came for the reading with a very short haircut and a very androgynous look. He told her he was going for something else—the retention of the traditional "feminine" side and making that compatible with heroic action. Thus, her affair with *National Geographic* photographer Bob Campbell was an important part of the story—not only to show what she gave up for her political commitment to the gorillas, but also to prove that she was still a sexual woman capable of pursuing and enjoying heterosexual desire. In an effort to advance the discourse on ecology, he had to have the gorillas playing themselves. He couldn't do what was done in *Greystoke*—have

people playing apes in hyperrealistic simian drag. He did admit there were compromises: using a chimpanzee dressed up as a baby gorilla, and using stand-ins in the few scenes where gorillas are attacked by poachers. Yet the great majority of the footage was shot by documentary film-makers who specialized in wildlife photography, and who had to adhere to the stringent restrictions laid down by the Rwandan government to protect the gorillas.

I don't mean to question the earnestness or importance of the film-maker's goals of honoring an heroic woman or supporting her ecological quest; I merely want to demonstrate that the film is regressive on other registers and that dominant ideology dies hard. Even though the film centers on a modern independent woman, it still functions to restore the patriarchy. On the one hand, Fossey rejects marriage and the traditional patriarchal family to pursue her own heroic mission. Yet she is chosen and empowered by a scientific patriarch, the famous anthropologist Louis Leakey, who tells her he wants to study these creatures to discover who *he* is. Thus, her quest is a search for forefathers. And what she finds there in the mist and seeks to preserve is the prototype of the patriarchal family, which can be found even among our primate relatives. Her love is focused, not on the adulterous white photographer Bob Campbell, with whom she has a sexual relationship, but on Digit, the dominant male gorilla of the group she studies, who is brutally beheaded by peewee poachers and whose fate and grave she ultimately shares. The patriarchal Digit is figured as a doubly endangered species: not only as a mountain gorilla but also as a father within the family.

The regressive ideology of *Gorillas* is most apparent and disturbing on the registers of race and global politics. As in the most traditional colonialist representations of the Third World, Africa functions as an exotic background against which white protagonists discover their unique difference. Here, that difference is defined as a superior moral wisdom and advanced scientific know-how which enable them to save an endangered species. In contrast, the narrow-minded blacks of Rwanda are shown to be immersed in divisive little wars and in petty economic struggles to make a living and survive. Their politics and poaching become the primary obstacles to Fossey's noble quest. Africa is identified not with its human inhabitants and their culture but with the gorillas, who are claimed as forefathers by the whites as well as the blacks. The trans-species connection between Dian Fossey and the gorillas is made at the expense of the African population, which is clearly subordinated in terms of narrative representation.[3]

From this perspective, *Gorillas* is not much different from *Sheena*, one of the white goddess remakes which blatantly celebrate pastoral regression to an idealized primitive past. As a white goddess, Sheena is also allied with the enlightened environmentalists and journalists against greedy Africans out for a quick buck. As Jude Akudinobi argues, the white goddess also appears in other "quality" pictures such as the Oscar-winning *Out of Africa* which, like *Gorillas*, also fuses a supposedly liberal discourse on gender with a racist-imperialist depiction of Africa.

In *Gorillas* the white patriarch grants Fossey permission to go to Africa and become the white goddess, protectively reigning over the Africans as the delegate of a superior culture with all of its imperialist heritage. Once there, she is aided by another white goddess (played by Julie Harris), who is specifically identified with the colonialist past, but who has stayed on after African independence to cultivate her little patch of Eden amidst the chaos brought by tribal wars.

Fossey is also aided by adopting and exploiting to her advantage the cultural practice of the Africans. Just as she imitates the sounds and gestures of the gorillas, which help in her task of reaching, studying, and saving them, she also imitates the religious practices of the poaching tribes, which enables her to frighten them as a powerful witch. At some point she oversteps the line; she becomes too much like an African (both gorilla and native) and hence goes crazy. It's this conscious immersion in otherness which distinguishes her from white males like Campbell and Leakey and which ends up costing her life.

The African population is most individualized in the character of Sembagare, the tracker who functions as a loyal servant and friend to Fossey. Like Robinson Crusoe's Man Friday, or Karen Blixten's loyal servant, he is presented as a noble savage who has adopted Christianity and who is somehow isolated from his people

(in this case, his family and tribe have been killed off in tribal wars) and therefore available to devote himself totally to his white mistress. Although this kind of intimacy might lead to romantic love or sexual attraction, this aspect is totally suppressed and displaced onto the dominant gorilla Digit, whose murder Fossey deeply grieves. Significantly, at the end of the film it is the desexualized African tracker who removes the stones dividing the adjoining graves of Fossey and Digit, enabling their souls to co-mingle and co-habit in eternity. When asked about Sembagare's fate, Apted said that the real person on whom this character was primarily based was actually arrested as a suspect after Fossey's murder and was subsequently murdered in prison, as if to suppress clues that might lead to her killers. Apted claimed that he chose to omit Sembagare's fate from the film, along with the inquiry and trial surrounding Fossey's death, because he feared they would distract us from her victory. While this may be true, his decision implies that the fate of this character and of those Africans he represents is less important than that of the gorillas. These narrative choices of dramatizing Leakey's lecture and excluding all mention of Sembagare's fate carry heavy ideological implications.

Thus, like our return to adolescence in the triumphant oedipal comedies, even the return to our ancestral primates in *Gorillas* proves, on second glance, not to be so innocent. For, while seeming to altruistically empower those usually subordinated under patriarchy—the other gender and the other species—this quest is pursued at the cost of another oppression: the oppressive subordination of the other race, the colonized, the Third World—precisely those who were also suppressed (along with Jesse Jackson) from the recent pop presidential campaign between contrasting supermen and pee-wees, interchangeable fathers and sons.

NOTES

1. Since writing this piece, I have read two wonderful essays that provide a much fuller analysis of the ways in which PeeWee's Playhouse destabilizes gender and other conventional boundaries under patriarchy. See Constance Penley's "The Cabinet of Dr. Pee-wee: Consumerism and Sexual Terror" and Ian Balfour's "The Playhouse of the Signifier: Reading Pee-wee Herman," both published in the special "Male Trouble" issue of *Camera Obscura*, No. 17 (May 1988), 133-167.
2. As Grigoris Daskalogrigorakis has brought to my attention, this argument is detailed by Bernard Sergent in *Homosexuality in Greek Myth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986, chapter 5).
3. My commentary on this film has been deeply influenced by Jude Akudinobi's unpublished dissertation, *Under the Sign of Darkness: The Depiction of Africa in American Films, 1980-1988*, which does not discuss *Gorillas in the Mist*, but delineates several of these same patterns in many other films of the 1980s.

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CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA

Seeing and Believing, Science and Mythology

Notes on the "Mythological" Genre

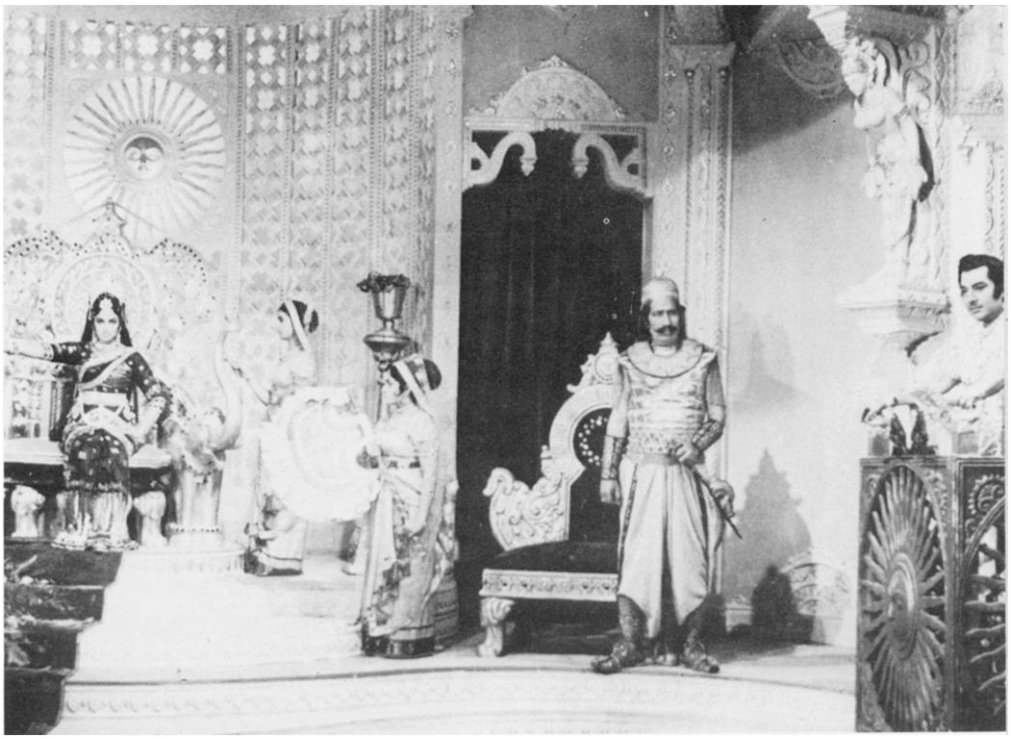
One remarkable outcome of the transplantation of the technological art of the cinema into India's pre-industrial society is that the adage "seeing is believing" acquires startling new meaning. In the industrial societies of the West, audiovisual media (film or video) are both trusted and distrusted. Thus Western audiences routinely make sophisticated judgments about the "realism" or "believability" of plots and characters: love stories on the screen may be effective emotionally yet at the same time clearly recognized as fiction; news stories on television are by and large believed, although the reported speeches of politicians may not be. The situation with Indian audiences has been very different, and the differences are not reassuring.

When films began in earnest in India, with Phalke's *Harischchandra* in 1913, suddenly the gods and god-like men of mythology came to overwhelmingly visible life. This 3,700-foot film's story, taken from the great epic the *Mahabharata,* and dramatizing personal sacrifice for duty, was a stupendous public success. (It was remade 20 times in eight languages in the succeeding 50 years.) Its successors, films like Phalke's own *Bhasmasur, Mohini Savitri* [Seductress Savitri], and *Lanka Dahan* [The Burning of Lanka] were equally popular and established "the mythological" as a long-lasting genre of Indian cinema—important still today to a degree inconceivable to the West even in the heyday of the Western genre. Previously the Hindus had seen their trinity and pantheon in their minds and in images of earth and stone. Now they saw them walking, flying in space, throwing flaming discuses (Vishnu's Sudershana-Chakra), setting offenders aflame with a burning look, making the dead come alive, appearing out of and vanishing into nowhere.

Previously the country of the gods had existed only in the mind's eye, sustained by a network of myths, legends, and static visual representations spawned by the traditional epics and the legendary repositories of history and religion called *purancas.* The passionate loves and hates of the gods had been seen as play (*leela*) evoked by the devotee in his or her imagination. Now, suddenly, these imagined scenes were there, on the screen, as reality![1] Here was the god Raja Harishchandra (of the *Mahabharata*) walking barefoot through the brambles, giving away his son and wife for the sake of charity. There was Rama (from the *Ramayana*) walking with Sita in Dandakaranya forest in the many films of Vijay Bhatt. Inside the cinema theater, the devout respectfully took off their shoes and sat with piously folded hands; some even threw offerings at the screen.

Ramrajya [roughly, "Rama's realm"], the ideal kingdom celebrated in the *Ramayana,* ruled by Ram, king of Ayodhya, had always lived in the Hindu mind suspended outside historical time. It was a vision hidden in the Hindu heart through a millenium of alien domination—first by the Muslim kingdoms that expanded into an Indian empire, and then by the Christian British who ruled from afar. This deep-seated nostalgic dream of Ramrajya, sanctified into divine myth, was what Gandhi appealed to in support of his nonviolent campaign against British rule. At a critical gathering in 1920 at King Edward Hostel, he moved everyone in a way they had never been moved by declaring that the present situation was *Ravan-Raj*—the rule of the evil king Ravana who kidnapped Rama's wife Sita.[2] In using this Hindu mythology, Gandhi made a kind of contact before the days of mass-communication technology that leaders of later generations could not.

Until 1923, 70% of Indian films were "mythologicals," reliably successful at the box office since they appealed directly to a diverse audience linked by the common undercurrent of



HARISHCHANDRA TARIMATI, *one of the numerous variations on the Harishchandra theme*

religious beliefs. Besides, they helped to hide the social stigma then attached to performers, especially if it was a woman behind the divine garb. And they served the deeper purpose of affirming faith in an age of alien challenge. The British conquerors were preceded (and followed) by Christian missionaries always eager to bribe the native believer with their kind of education, promising advancement in the new world they were making, full of marvelous machines such as trains, buses, and trams, post offices, telegraphs, and ships. The advantages of embracing the conquerors' faith appeared to be many; at poorer social and intellectual levels, they were difficult to resist. It was even more difficult to separate the self into behavioral compartments —outwardly conforming with the conquerors' norms, inwardly clinging to traditional faiths. For the urban majority, seeing the gods in the cinema became a subtle aid in propping up belief in them, and gave Indian cinema a quasi-religious tenor utterly without parallel in the West. The fact that the screen gods were humans dressed up in divine costumes mattered little. Rich people took early stars like Prem Adib (who played Rama in *Harishchandra*) or Shobhana Samarth (who played his wife Sita) straight from the studios to their homes and worshipped them with flowers, lights, and music.[3]

As the screen lit up in the vast night in the open air, or inside the womb of the dark cinema, a primeval dream unfolded before the eyes in which the gods lived and had their being, emerging from an ancient communal memory secreted within the self. The thrill was no less than that of the first audiences in Europe trembling as the Lumières' train approached the station. For the devout Hindu, it was almost like the traditional glimpse of God in a dream that directly influenced action—something enshrined, decades later, through the sympathetic but unbelieving eye of Satyajit Ray in *Devi*.

Seeing gods in the cinema was very different from seeing them in folk-theater performances. The theater gods of Bengal or Karnataka could not actually fly, or burn, or vanish. The actors in the folk theater were too real; too often you knew where they lived, and saw them paint their faces before they entered the arena. The true play of the gods, impossible to disbelieve, was only manifest when the cinema arrived; here they were real and yet shadowy, not grossly present in a way to make them lose their distance and dignity. The folk theater was (and still is, despite its decline) actually based on what we might call today Brechtian alienation; when film-makers like Ketan Mahta evoke its forms in their films, they keep spectators firmly seated in the reality of their cinema seats.

The medium of cinema works against the stylization of folk forms. When film is stylized today, as in the works of a Mani Kaul or a Nirad Mahapatra, it may obtain success on the

international festival circuit but it loses the popular reach of the folk tradition. In pre-industrial society, production was individualized, regionally fixed; its art was largely an anonymous by-product of religion and regional culture enclosed within narrow limits of social and geographical mobility. The difference between art and craft was marginal. The maker of an image or a water pot knew the buyer of it personally and sold it through direct encounter. The folk theater reflected this reality. It drew both its religious and secular content, sometimes fusing them, sometimes treating them separately, from the prevailing tradition of the area. It projected them in a way suitable for open spaces and dim lights. Naturalism in acting and staging were hardly possible; the voice had to be raised in order to be heard, the gesture had to be grand in order to be seen. It is this style that was at first directly transferred to the cinema but modified over the years to acquire a greater degree of naturalism. In any case, compared to the folk theater, the illusion of reality in the cinema was greater even at the beginning. For one thing, the miracles, wrought in Phalke's mythologicals with the innovative flair of a Méliès, came to life far more vividly than they could ever have either on the new-fangled proscenium stage or in the traditional folk theater.

In an interview in 1979, Kamalabai Gokhale, reminiscing on her acting in the early mythologicals of Dadabhai Phalke around 1914, commented on the cinema's disconcerting immediacy: "Theatre acting is done within the norms of restraint. It is symbolic, particularly in love scenes. On the stage you keep your distance, decide your limit and say that I would go no further than holding hands . . . But in a love scene in a film, you have to embrace—really embrace—the other fellow in front of the camera. Otherwise it would make no sense." This was not long after the period when even prostitutes found it socially embarrassing to appear in the cinema, and men often had to play the parts of women.

The cinema has a lot to do with materialism. Our apprehension of individual and collective life, and the factors surrounding or determining them must be accomplished, in industrial society, through a new ability to understand material things. The cinema was made possible by scientists who sought to fashion instruments

The play of the gods: SAVITRI *(1937)*

to capture animal locomotion or the transit of a planet. Babbage was a mathematician, Herschel an astronomer, Etienne Jules Marey an anatomist; Eadweard Muybridge, photographer, may be considered the only artist among the inventors of cinema. The rest were scientists or, like Edison and Dickson, technologists.

The very need for an additional dimension to the communicative arts arose out of conditions created by the industrial revolution. Modern technology, urbanization, high mobility, and rapid communication introduced a whole new set of sights, sounds, symbols and their material inter-relationships which demanded interpretation. A jet fighter shooting up the sky leaving a vapor trail, or a man walking along the street seen from a hundred floors above can be evoked in writing, but when they are seen in the cinema they carry a more formidable kind of conviction of materiality. But far from inducing a "modern," skeptical, secular spirit, the mythological genre gave access for the Hindu pantheon to this powerful instrument of belief; instead of retreating before science, as in the West, the Indian gods obtained new life from it.

More recently, the gods of Indian politics—often originally born in the mythological world of cinema—have used the same technological instrument to induce popular conviction in their divinity—and obtain support at the ballot box as avatars of Krishna or Rama. Indeed two of

them who promised, and created, something of the illusion of realizing Ramrajya both bear Rama's name: Madanapally Gopala Ramachandran in the state of Tamil Nadu and Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh. The process of equation of fact with myth, the easy movement of the Indian mind between the two, is helped by the nature of visual perception in pre-industrial societies. A servant newly arrived from a village saw a painting by Jamini Roy hanging on the wall while he was dusting my room. (This was before Roy had become an icon in the art world; Calcutta's British-trained middle class was still objecting to the long necks of his women, with eyes extended out sideways beyond their sockets.) I asked him what he thought of it. "It is exactly like a photograph," he replied. For him, the illusion of verisimilitude came easy. The morphological perceptions of industrial peoples, tempered by a scientific assessment of what appears real, are more critical; they instantly verify the form in terms of geometry or physiology, gauging its solidity, comparing it to others of the species and, through inductive logic, generalizing from the particular to some general gestalt.

The appearance of any element depends upon its place and function in the pattern as a whole. "Far from being a mechanical recording of sensory elements, vision turned out to be a truly creative grasp of reality," wrote Rudolf Arnheim.[4] Thinking within the orbit of Baconian science, one would conclude that all vision is shaped by a struggle for the orderly conception of natural form, proceeding in a logical development from the perceptually simplest patterns to increasing complexity. When the Western-trained mind looks at one side of a ball, we also "see" the other, i.e., not a partial but a complete sphere.

But to the average Hindu, the elephant-headed god Ganesha (celebrated in the last sequence of *Salaam Bombay!*) is not a representation of an abstract idea; he exists, even though he cannot be encountered in the flesh. The question of a purely *material* existence behind the form is unimportant, because in traditional Indian art, as opposed to the academic art born out of scientific awareness in post-Renaissance Europe, the form is seen in the mind, not in reality. Thus the form of the seated Buddha embodies the idea of meditation; the dancing Shiva embodies the idea of cosmic rhythm. The idea exists in human form, thus *manifesting itself* in material terms; whereas in European perception, the material form exists mutely in nature and must be informed with an idea. There is some reversal of this in post-industrial society's sophisticated modern "Art," but that is confined to a small minority producing an elite speculative-market commodity rather than the whole of society yielding art as a by-product of essential socioeconomic processes as in pre-industrial societies. Even so, modern art remains within the tenets of scientific perception; it analyzes light or density, or assembles aspects of material reality; the point of reference from which it withdraws, or against which it contends, is still the naturalistic image.

For the bulk of the population of India, however, the process of perception has not been metamorphosed by science into a way of grasping the material existence of objects. The cinema therefore still works to merge myth and fact rather than to separate them. "Even after seven decades of films, gullible members of the audience were seen laying themselves prostrate before the screen deity in motion picture theaters throughout India when *Jai Santoshi Maa* [Hail Mother Santoshi, 1975] was shown."[5] Only in high-literacy areas subjected to Western thought structures, especially Marxist materialism, such as the states of Kerala and West Bengal, does the cinema audience have a ready ability to distinguish myth from fact. Thus Prem Nazir may hold the Guinness Books of Records title for having made the largest number of films of any actor in the world (more than 600!) but when he developed political ambitions the people of Kerala made it quite clear that their matinee idol would not be acceptable as a political chief. This was not the case with M. G. Ramachandran or N. T. Rama Rao, the two ex-star state Chief Ministers. The nearest Western parallel to what they have accomplished might be Charlton Heston, having played Moses not once but dozens of times, running for office as a divinely wise law-giver—and winning overwhelmingly.

M. G. Ramachandran became Chief Minister in Tamil Nadu through a carefully planned building of his "savior" image in a series of films. These films showed "MGR" always in a favorable light, doing good to various sectors of society (taken up one by one in his films). Moreover, they repeatedly represented the colors of

"N.T.R." in STREEMAD VIRATA PARVAM, *a Telugu mythological film based on the Mahabharata*

the party flag and used rhetoric that dramatized the party manifesto. The do-gooder of the screen was easily elected because myth and fact had merged; there was little public consciousness of the savior image as *illusion*. When someone made a feature film, during MGR's Chief Ministership, on the shortage of water in his state, one comment heard was that the film had the wrong hero; if only MGR had been in charge, he would have brought the water. There is an element of Frazerian imitative magic here; if water can be brought in the screen image, it will come in real life. Even if it does not come soon, the magic principle is not altered; the faith that the savior will ultimately save, persists.

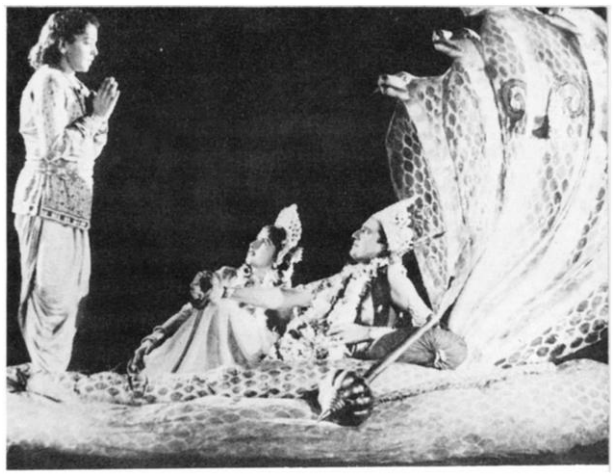
N. T. Rama Rao acted in 292 films before he became Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh by defeating the Congress Party nationally led by Indira Gandhi. In most cases he had acted in mythological roles as various gods of the enormous Hindu pantheon, which is comparable only to the ancient Greek. Before he came to politics, "NTR's" image as a manifestation of God had been firmly established. Early in the morning, a crowd would assemble before his house every day, crying, "Devadu! Devadu!" [God! God!] when he appeared on the balcony, dressed in his pyjamas, often with a toothbrush. When he stood for the elections, women washed the roads along which he would travel and walked miles to have a glimpse of him passing by in the distance. There was no question of God not being elected.

Mircea Eliade commented on the traditional separation of myth and fact in India, giving the example of millions of religious-minded women who pour libations upon the *lingam* which they know to be a representation of the male member resting in the female, but have learnt to see it purely as a symbol of God (the divine *creative* principle) without ever confusing it with the physical fact it represents. As old women, charged with religious fervor, place flowers upon the phallus, nothing could be further from their minds than sex. The cinema has stood this traditional relationship of myth and fact on its head. Myth has become fact. The film star who plays God has become God. The cinema is too palpable, too reflective of the "surfaces of reality"; the objects seen in it cannot be turned into mere symbols. So much so, that when something goes wrong (as it very often does) in MGR's or NTR's states, they are not blamed. Their teflon images are not touched; the tarnish overtakes their minions who are perceived as incompetent. God is unable to function because of the failings of man. Only the urban upper-middle class, educated in modern sciences and humanities, are prone to disillusion. NTR's God-like appearances on the balcony continued; so did his actions, like seeing visitors at 5 a.m. wearing an earring in one ear or dressed up like the great religious reformer Vivekananda, complete with a huge turban on his head. God is as convinced of his divinity as his people down on earth are.

World cinema, as I have suggested earlier, represents a pressure, within the evolution of the popular arts, towards greater naturalism.[6] Indian cinema, developing on a huge scale within a mainly agricultural population with myth-laden minds, countered this pressure by mythologizing the present, but with the expansion of the industrial-urban sector the mythological as a genre has had to beat a retreat;

today the share of mythologicals in total production is only 20%, down from 70% in the twenties.[7] The mythological cannot deal with the multifold phenomena of modern society and becomes inadequate, despite exceptions like *Jai Santoshi Maa,* which was enormously successful and spread nationwide a previously very restricted goddess cult.[8]

What happens in consequence is that cars, skyscrapers, jet planes, and gun fights are now used to endorse the same basic traditional faiths as the mythologicals did, without denying the audience its visual experience of modern life. For example, in *Amar Akbar Anthony* three brothers estranged in childhood have grown up separately under surrogate fathers of the three major religions of contemporary India—Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity—but ultimately come together again at the end in a realization of their (Hindu) unity. In adulthood they know each other without realizing their relatedness, and their mother is also present, although they know her only as a surrogate mother. (The father has been disposed of very early in the story.) When the mother loses her eyesight, Akbar takes her to a famous saint, Shirdi Sai Baba, and implores him to restore her sight. Two blobs of light (you can see them, they are *there*) issue from the saint's eyes and travel across the screen in a panning shot over the congregation, stop at the mother's eyes and enter into them. Now she can see. Other manifestations in the film—clothes, places, cars, trains—are modern, but the faith invoked is no different from that in *Bhakta Prahlad* (about a legendary boy-devotee of God) or *Bharat Milap* (about Rama's devoted, ideal brother from the *Ramayana*), or any of the professed mythologicals. In films like *Trishul* [Trident] and *Karz* [Debt] dead mothers call upon their sons from the other world to take revenge on enemies. They power the muscles of the protagonists with a divine maternal force enabling them to perform miracles, such as defeating thirty strongmen with their bare hands. In *Karz,* the mix of the modern and the traditional peaks in the reincarnation of the hero whom an evil but sexy woman had run over by a car near a shrine of Goddess Kali. The revenge consists of the running over of the villainess by a car near the same shrine. Thus is the present constantly mythologized and the currents of traditional belief kept alive underneath a modern exterior.



BHAKTA PRAHLAD *(1959)*

Except for the core of religious doctrine and ritual, all other physical manifestations are jazzily modern in these films; perhaps the object is to emphasize the means of resolution of conflicts as divine and eternal, above the purview of social change. Traditional faith is not allowed to be subverted by the spirit of doubt and scientific enquiry that led to the invention of the modern industrial products parading across screen space. Closely related to this is the way certain new visual models came to dominate the mythological genre, particularly in the costuming of the gods. The painter Raja Ravi Verma's imitative English academic recreations of Indian gods and goddesses transformed them from the superbly idealized figures of the Ajanta frescoes and the stone images of Vishna or Shiva into florid bazaar oleographs in a crude homage to the naturalistic idiom of the colonial rulers' art. Nonetheless, today any treatment of the gods in the cinema that did not follow Ravi Verma's insipid style would be in trouble with the audience. Yet it is this feeble model of mythology that has had to retreat in the cinema under the pressing need for encounters with the modern. Interestingly, and perhaps with parallels in the West, this debased mythological spirit has reasserted itself through television, in programs like the *Ramayana* series with its Ravi Verma style of visuals; the driving spirit behind its look is a fixed fundamentalist view of tradition uninformed by either a historical sensibility or an understanding of Indian art traditions.

Thus India's age-old society, faced with the specter of modern science, still balks at the prospect of being dominated by it and shaken out of the security of traditional faiths. A significant though small minority whose body and soul have both entered the industrial age pro-

duces the "new cinema," but the vast pre-industrial masses of India continue to mythologize both the past and the present.

NOTES

1. "All the movements and expressions of the characters on the screen were so realistic that the spectators felt that those moving characters were also speaking . . . Harishchandra and Taramati of the screen bring tears to the eyes of the spectators. This would perhaps not happen if one saw them in flesh and blood on the stage. The scenes of the forest, the forest fire, the river, the hangman's house, the hen pecking around—all these are unrivaled . . ." Letter to the Editor of the *Kesari,* Pune, 6th May, 1913.
2. Pritish Nandy, Interview with Kamlapati Tripathi, *The Illustrated Weekly of India,* January 1984.
3. Narmada Shahane, *Studies in Film History,* Film Institute of Poona, 1970.
4. Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception,* University of California Press, 1954.
5. B. V. Dharap, "The Mythological, or Taking Fate for Granted," *The Indian Cinema Superbazaar* ed. Aruna Vasudev and Philippe Lenglet, Vikas, Delhi 1983. Santoshi Maa (Mother Santoshi) was a little-known local goddess made into an all-India cult by the film on her.
6. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1965.
7. B. V. Dharap, op.cit.
8. For a discussion of the relevance of *Jai Santoshi Ma* to contemporary urban Hindu society, see Veena Das, "The Mythological Film and its Framework of Meaning," *India International Centre Quarterly,* March 1980.
9. B. V. Dharap, op.cit. ". . . So long as ignorance, illiteracy, poverty, superstition rule the large mass of people in this country . . . such pictures will always have an audience and the sway of mythological films will continue." Also see op.cit., reference to new audiences being initiated to cinema through the mythological and accounting for its survival.

Reviews

LITTLE VERA

Director: Vasily Pichul (sometimes written "Pitchul"). Script: Maria Khmelik. Photography: Yefim Reznikov. Music: Vladimir Matietski. Gorky Film Studios, 1988. Distribution: IFEX.

Vasily Pichul's *Little Vera* (1988) has emerged as a new Soviet film that has found a home audience and an enthusiastic one abroad wherever it has been shown. On the most immediate level, the film can be seen as a clear example of Gorbachev's *glasnost* (new openness) policy as applied to film. But it is much more.

While not a "woman's film" *per se*, this recent Soviet work set in a drab Ukranian industrial town is written by a woman (Pichul's wife, Maria Khmelik) and is centered around Vera (Natalia Negoda), an eighteen-year-old Russian woman whose disjointed emotional life suggests significant questions of gender as well as of *glasnost*. As Teresa de Lauretis notes in *Technologies of Gender*, "Although the meanings vary with each culture, a sex-gender system is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in each society." The raw edges of *Little Vera*'s narrative are thus those of an oedipal and patriarchal system (political/economic/cultural) of signification and representation that is showing serious signs of disruption and change.

Three early shots set the tone and direction for the rest of the film. The opening establishing shot before dawn is of a bleak industrial town on the banks of a large body of water. The second is a morning scene on the balcony of a cheaply built apartment house as Vera is told in a brusque and unsympathetic manner by her mother to "make something of your life . . . as your brother has done." And shortly thereafter, again on the balcony, her working-class father quietly tells her in a comforting voice, "Cherish your youth."

What Maria Khemlik captures in her script, which she wrote in 1983 after visiting her husband's native town and family (the script found no sympathetic producer for four years, in other words until *glasnost* had come into being), is the "on-edge" existence Vera lives out. The film chronicles a few brief weeks in Vera's life. The driving force of the narrative is her romance with an engineering student, Sergei—a Dionysian free spirit. We observe their engagement, separation and eventual reunion, tentative though it may be, on the evening that Vera verges on suicide.

American reviewers will surely capitalize on the many "firsts" in this low-budget Soviet feature by a young husband and wife team: first Soviet film with a sense of sexual candor (the actress Natalia Negoda has contracted to grace the pages of *Playboy*), the first mention of AIDS in a feature film (a passing joke about government warning pamphlets), and the first

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Soviet youth today: Andrei Fomin, Natalya Negoda, Alexandra Tabakova in LITTLE VERA

direct suggestion of non-white children as offspring from white mothers. Yet I am more interested in the strength of the film as a refreshingly straightforward contemporary portrait of a provincial Soviet young woman and her relationships. And among these, it is her close tie to her "nurturing" father that holds a special interest.

The intensity of the father–daughter tie alone gives *Little Vera* a curious urgency unusual to traditional Western narrative patterns. But it is also important to view the film in relation to the changes being wrought under *glasnost* since film-makers began to replace bureaucrats in the hierarchy of the Soviet film industry in 1985. From this perspective Pichul's film is notable on at least four counts: it is made by a director who came from the working-class provincial background he treats on the screen (he is of Russian origin from Zhdanov, a Ukranian industrial town on the Sea of Azov); it was produced by Gorky Studios (Moscow), one of the smaller studios, thus suggesting the emerging importance of studios other than the mammoth Mosfilm in Moscow and Lenfilm in Leningrad; it dares to show rough edges in terms of cinematic style—a direct alternative to the long tradition of "well-made" Soviet films, including even the auteuristic and lyrical works of a director such as Andrei Tarkovsky, the folk/mythic surrealism of a Paradzhanov, the sense of robust humor of Georgian comedies and satire (Abuladze's *Repentance*), or the imaginative mixed-media films (drama and documentary) of someone like the Film-makers' Union president, Elim Klimov; and it is an important contribution to a growing number of films that honestly capture a "no win" mood of many Soviet young people today as opposed to the forced optimism of so many Socialist Realism films of the past.

Khemlik depicts the edge of a life without spiritual or even passionate materialistic values. Vera is at the same time empty and cramped. She is cramped by the drabness of her town, her job as a switchboard operator, the lack of physical and psychological space in her family's apartment, and by a general absence of alternatives to the roles that appear laid out for her. And she is empty of clues as to how to break out of her environment. Her name, of course, is emblematic. "Vera" means both "faith" and "verdict" and thus "little Vera" reflects both her age/position and her lack of hope or, conversely, the glimmer that hope may exist. Both readings make sense.

More specifically, Vera is on the edge of a perception of how her life is defined by the men who surround her. There is her successful doctor brother, Victor, who has even managed to move to Moscow. Andrei is the ineffectual young man, "calm and polite," who pursues her like a puppy dog and who thus offers her a traditional romance, marriage, social status

which she rejects. More important, however, Vera exists between the sympathetic acceptance of her quietly desperate father and the antisocial freedom represented in Sergei and their tempestuous affair. Neither wholly modern (despite her streaked hair and mod clothes) nor traditional, Vera is squarely caught in the middle with little hope of escape.

Little Vera does, however, chart this young Soviet woman's development as a movement away from her father and towards her lover-fiancé. While much of feminist theory details the importance of the mother-daughter relationship in its reevaluation of Freudian psychology (the Demeter-Persephone pattern, as Carol Gilligan and others note), little work has updated Freud's brief exploration of the Electra Complex (a daughter's adoration for her father). And while there is much in literature and film about daughters under the spell and shadow of domineering and/or impressive "successful" fathers, there has, to my count, been relatively scant attention given to the possibility of nurturing relationships between an "unsuccessful" and nondomineering father figure and daughter. *Little Vera* in part explores this terrain.

Because of the distance her mother places between her husband and Vera, the daughter must also play wife and mother to her father. Thus while the father urges Vera to "cherish her youth," Vera is, in fact, the one who takes his complaints about his heart trouble seriously and who then undresses him and tucks him in bed early in the film.

The developing conflict of roles and values within Vera comes to a crisis once Sergei is officially her fiancé. A birthday party for her father becomes the climax for her confusion. Pichul and Khmelik use an effective structuring device within the film according to which almost every scene starts on a seemingly congenial note and then proceeds to break down. The birthday party is no exception. Vera is caught in the middle once more as the two main forces in her life suddenly quarrel and come to blows. Sergei, who operates on spontaneous passion, beats up the father and tosses him into the bathroom, locking him in. The scene ends as the father frees himself and stabs Sergei—sending him to the hospital in critical condition.

Afterwards, as Vera attempts to cope with her divided feelings, the family plans a picnic by the sea. That moment disolves into bitter antagonism as her mother shouts to Vera, "I never wanted to have you anyway." Denied maternal friendship and support, Vera retreats to the edge of the sea in a rain storm only to be followed by her father. He gently holds her as he quietly says, "My little daughter." Pichul holds the moment long enough for us to feel the mutual understanding and shared loneliness these two feel for each other. And he manages to do so without pushing the scene into traditional melodramatic forms (even foregoing underscoring music).

Vera is unable to negotiate her emotional/psychological life between her father and Sergei. If her father had been the traditional patriarch, the separation would have been easier. But though Vera herself never communicates her confusion on a verbal level, we sense she glimpses the limiting realities of life with either man and has not yet reached a level of consciousness in which she would consider life alone. (Compare the strong ending of Abram Room's *Bed and Sofa* [1927] in which the young heroine, caught between her life with her husband and lover, walks out on both, claiming "Neither of you is worthy to be the father of my child.")

The suicide scene in her family's apartment follows soon thereafter. In a terrifying depression involving booze and pills, she clasps a childhood photograph of herself to her chest. Soon after her brother and Sergei (who has escaped from the hospital) reach Vera before she loses consciousness, she and Sergei are shown together again in Vera's bed, exhausted, frightened, quiet. "Do you love me?" she asks Sergei, as she has throughout their relationship. "I was afraid," he replies. They are not yet married, have no apartment to go to, no careers unrolling before them. And Vera still has little faith in her own identity. However, they are together . . . alone. A little hope, therefore.

But the film closes with two final images: that of the father keeling over in the kitchen, followed by that of a longshot of the small city similar to the opening image. The mother has no role in this resolution. And whether her father is dead or simply having another attack, it is clear that Vera has already begun the difficult task of "growing up" and leaving her childhood behind. As comforting as her father's affection has been, it was not enough,

could *never* be enough. Pichul ends as he began, with another dawn shot. Hope or life repeating itself? Vera and we, the spectators who have lived (vicariously) through her experiences, are free to decide.

In the spaces created by such "unfinalizedness" (Mikhail Bakhtin's term) the Sphinx has a chance to set an alternative agenda in the Oedipus tale without the need for suicide and self-sacrifice.

If the British phase of neorealism in cinema in the late fifties and early sixties was characterized as "kitchen-sink" realism, *Little Vera* might be dubbed "kitchen-table" cinema, a "novi realism." For Pichul's unflinching camera grounds Vera in a literally cramped familiar environment (the apartment) centered further around the kitchen table and the different functions it serves for the family—work/meals and conversation. Even in the finely etched scene between Vera and her girlfriend at her apartment, the scene is cast around the kitchen table as Lena, her friend and the mother of a black child, announces she is content to settle for a relationship with a boring but well-meaning middle-aged man. In the same scene, shortly before what is to be Vera's wedding, Vera, who has been on edge throughout the film, suddenly breaks into tears: "This is the happiest time of my life but I want to cry all the time."

Such a scene—and the film is chock full of revealing "everyday" moments—suggests how far contemporary Soviet cinema has now been allowed to move from the false enthusiasms and wooden idealism of Socialist Realism in its most rigid forms. There is an engaging offhandedness about many of the sequences that suggests a blend of improvisation and keen writing paired at a conceptual level. Again, such a disjoined approach to narrative not only reflects "youth" but also Vera's perspective as a woman, unhappy with her lot, but not yet articulate enough to determine her own destiny. And of course some of the images/lines/contexts may be striking but not completely intelligible to the non-Soviet audience.

In a beach scene, for instance, restless youths tattoo large images of St. Basil's cathedral on their backs. A sign of protest or of religious belief or of some level of joking? Perhaps a blend of all three. Also on the beach, Sergei asks Vera, "What is our common goal?" and she replies with "Communism" in a voice that is tinged with irony, parody, but also, we sense, with the leftover response of years of conditioning that has lost all meaning. "The challenge today," Pichul explained to me in Montreal (August 1988) during his first trip with his wife out of the Soviet Union, "is to find some *spiritual* values in this life."

Pichul is more modest than some Soviet critics who have already dubbed *Little Vera* "the first honest Soviet film." "What's great is that we actually made it," the 28-year-old director explained in Montreal, where the film was awarded Best First Feature. Thus his answer to those who felt the overall impression of the film was one of a crushing hopelessness was revealing: "The film is an attempt to come close to the abyss of our life today. Actually our real life is even darker, and yet I remain an optimist. Making a film is an exercise in hope!"

—ANDREW HORTON

HIGH TIDE

Director: Gillian Armstrong. Script: Laura Jones. Cinematography: Russell Boyd. Music: Mary Moffiatt and Ricky Fataar. Hemdale.

The landscapes and seascapes of Gillian Armstrong's *High Tide* are preternaturally clear and bright, and they're infused with colors that change throughout the movie. In the opening scenes the hillsides on the eastern coast of Australia are stunningly green, the beaches pure white, and the ocean beyond a rich, deep blue. Later the ocean may be black, penetrated by shards of white moonlight, and still later the water is as green as the hills, a natural green that is at once warm and inviting yet mysterious. The look cinematographer Russell Boyd has created for this film is markedly different from the look of the last movie he did with Armstrong—*Mrs. Soffel* in 1982—which was set in a Pittsburgh prison near the turn of the century and was filmed in edgy, sharp blacks and greys and browns and cold, harsh shades of white. The palette of that movie reflected the fractured emotional state and desperate bid for freedom of Mrs. Soffel, just as the look of *High Tide* reflects the penetrating perceptiveness, warmth and changeability of its heroine, Lilli, played by the extraordinary Judy Davis. The idea of matching the visual style of a movie to the in-

could *never* be enough. Pichul ends as he began, with another dawn shot. Hope or life repeating itself? Vera and we, the spectators who have lived (vicariously) through her experiences, are free to decide.

In the spaces created by such "unfinalizedness" (Mikhail Bakhtin's term) the Sphinx has a chance to set an alternative agenda in the Oedipus tale without the need for suicide and self-sacrifice.

If the British phase of neorealism in cinema in the late fifties and early sixties was characterized as "kitchen-sink" realism, *Little Vera* might be dubbed "kitchen-table" cinema, a "novi realism." For Pichul's unflinching camera grounds Vera in a literally cramped familiar environment (the apartment) centered further around the kitchen table and the different functions it serves for the family—work/meals and conversation. Even in the finely etched scene between Vera and her girlfriend at her apartment, the scene is cast around the kitchen table as Lena, her friend and the mother of a black child, announces she is content to settle for a relationship with a boring but well-meaning middle-aged man. In the same scene, shortly before what is to be Vera's wedding, Vera, who has been on edge throughout the film, suddenly breaks into tears: "This is the happiest time of my life but I want to cry all the time."

Such a scene—and the film is chock full of revealing "everyday" moments—suggests how far contemporary Soviet cinema has now been allowed to move from the false enthusiasms and wooden idealism of Socialist Realism in its most rigid forms. There is an engaging offhandedness about many of the sequences that suggests a blend of improvisation and keen writing paired at a conceptual level. Again, such a disjoined approach to narrative not only reflects "youth" but also Vera's perspective as a woman, unhappy with her lot, but not yet articulate enough to determine her own destiny. And of course some of the images/lines/contexts may be striking but not completely intelligible to the non-Soviet audience.

In a beach scene, for instance, restless youths tattoo large images of St. Basil's cathedral on their backs. A sign of protest or of religious belief or of some level of joking? Perhaps a blend of all three. Also on the beach, Sergei asks Vera, "What is our common goal?" and she replies with "Communism" in a voice that is tinged with irony, parody, but also, we sense, with the leftover response of years of conditioning that has lost all meaning. "The challenge today," Pichul explained to me in Montreal (August 1988) during his first trip with his wife out of the Soviet Union, "is to find some *spiritual* values in this life."

Pichul is more modest than some Soviet critics who have already dubbed *Little Vera* "the first honest Soviet film." "What's great is that we actually made it," the 28-year-old director explained in Montreal, where the film was awarded Best First Feature. Thus his answer to those who felt the overall impression of the film was one of a crushing hopelessness was revealing: "The film is an attempt to come close to the abyss of our life today. Actually our real life is even darker, and yet I remain an optimist. Making a film is an exercise in hope!"

—ANDREW HORTON

HIGH TIDE

Director: Gillian Armstrong. Script: Laura Jones. Cinematography: Russell Boyd. Music: Mary Moffiatt and Ricky Fataar. Hemdale.

The landscapes and seascapes of Gillian Armstrong's *High Tide* are preternaturally clear and bright, and they're infused with colors that change throughout the movie. In the opening scenes the hillsides on the eastern coast of Australia are stunningly green, the beaches pure white, and the ocean beyond a rich, deep blue. Later the ocean may be black, penetrated by shards of white moonlight, and still later the water is as green as the hills, a natural green that is at once warm and inviting yet mysterious. The look cinematographer Russell Boyd has created for this film is markedly different from the look of the last movie he did with Armstrong—*Mrs. Soffel* in 1982—which was set in a Pittsburgh prison near the turn of the century and was filmed in edgy, sharp blacks and greys and browns and cold, harsh shades of white. The palette of that movie reflected the fractured emotional state and desperate bid for freedom of Mrs. Soffel, just as the look of *High Tide* reflects the penetrating perceptiveness, warmth and changeability of its heroine, Lilli, played by the extraordinary Judy Davis. The idea of matching the visual style of a movie to the in-

ner life of its characters is a simple one, but there's nothing simple about the way Armstrong and Boyd carry it off in these two films, because the emotions of their heroines are in no way simple and straightforward. (These are not characters whose rising passions call up darkening clouds and thunderstorms.) Lilli's emotional state is even more precarious, perhaps, than Kate Soffel's; her modern situation and sensibility give her more options, but they don't make it easier for her to sort her way through them. Lilli isn't at all sure what she's after, but she isn't finding it in the cultural milieu presented in this movie. She seems to be constantly experiencing a mix of opportunities and emotions that keeps her half-paralyzed, half-impulsive, and barely in control. The reflective landscape of this movie is extremely complex; that's no simple "mood ocean" Boyd creates. The swirling, primary colors of its surface never completely mask its deeper undercurrents. Boyd's colors have incredible depth, from which other colors and darker emotions come churning up.

High Tide is the story of a drifter told from a woman's point of view, and—produced, directed, and written by women—it has one of the most completely realized female sensibilities ever captured on film. Though some of the dialogue and situations in the screenplay by Laura Jones may sound familiar, almost everything else in the movie comes with a fresh perspective. The film opens with blue titles set against a shimmering blue tinsel backdrop and the sounds of the ocean, and the combination is oddly beautiful; it's at once elegant and tacky and slightly mysterious. But a swish pan along the backdrop comes to rest on the thick, sweating, wrinkled face of an Elvis impersonator, and the contrast between his schlock vibrancy and the visual and aural serene lyricism of the credits is brazenly funny. The gyrating mock-Elvis is really an aging, third-rate rocker named Lester (Frankie J. Holden), and Lilli is a part of his group, singing backup with two other women in platinum-blond Cleopatra wigs and shimmering red and green glitter dresses. Armstrong cuts from woman to woman, each peering out from beneath her blond tresses; when she gets to Lilli, Judy Davis's distant, half-amused expression cuts right through what we're seeing. From her first moments we understand that up there on that cramped, dingy roadhouse stage is a true talent—not necessarily for singing, or anything easily classifiable, but for *something*, something Lilli hasn't discovered yet, and perhaps never will. Lilli knows she's wasting herself in this small tour group (it's just Lester and the three women; they split the nightly take and move on to the next location), and she holds the crowds, the material and Lester himself in semi-contempt. It's only semi-contempt, because she keeps herself amused, which keeps her from despising those around her. But it's easy to see why her cool irony makes Lester uncomfortable. His act is part put-on and part conviction, and he really connects with the aging ladies in the bars whom he sidles up to as part of his routine; they share the same kinds of memories. (Lester looks more like Liberace than Elvis, and he appeals to the same kind of audience.) Lester is just one of the movie's astonishingly authentic marginal characters, who pop up and drop out with little fuss. "What I think is essential, you think is boring," he tells Lilli in exasperation, and when he finally cuts her from the tour she's actually relieved; she knew it was coming. She knows and we know from her very first scenes that she's not a part of this roadhouse. She's just passing through it, understanding the culture out of which it grows, and because of that understanding not really hating it. Mingled in Lilli are equal measures of irony and sympathetic imagination; she appreciates the dreams of Lester, but they're not for her.

Lilli is ready to move on after leaving Lester, but car trouble strands her near the coastal fishing community of Eden, in a trailer court poised right at the edge of Boyd's spectacular vistas. It's here, at the Mermaid Caravan Park, that Lilli meets the daughter she abandoned as an infant when her husband died, and the movie is shaped around the tidal pull she feels toward this young girl. Ally (Claudia Karvan) was raised by Lilli's mother-in-law Bet (Jan Adele) when Lilli ran off; Bet now works as an ice-cream vendor in Eden, supporting Ally while holding down a semi-steady relationship with a local named Col (John Clayton). Bet is Lilli's opposite number; stolid, unimaginative, fiercely committed to Ally, Bet is the protective lioness to Lilli's scruffy, cagey hyena. When she catches Lilli hanging around her daughter, observing her every move from a distance, Bet maneuvers her considerable bulk between them.

She makes it clear: Lilli will snatch her daughter back over Bet's dead body. And Lilli sees this and acknowledges Bet's claim to the child, but can't help shadowing Ally, and cautiously befriending her. This is the central conflict of the movie: Lilli knows that Bet will make the more stable mother, and she initially has no intention of winning Ally back; she landed in Eden purely by chance. But the more she sees Ally the more she sees of herself, and that raises a ghostly army of emotions within her. She starts to think about where she's going, and what she wants, and she starts to think about the love for Ally that she lost, and how reclaiming that love might pull her back together.

The story is simple; it's the characters, what they feel and how they express themselves which are complex. The characters in this movie, right down through the bit players, are remarkably vivid. The mechanic (Mark Hembrow) to whom Lilli takes her car has a thoughtful, amused wariness that may remind you of Sam Shepard, but without Shepard's carefully cultivated distance. At first Lilli tries a sexy come-on to get him to lower the price of the repairs, but his sheer likability makes her drop the routine in self-disgust, and once she does so he knows he can trust her. No one in the movie comes accross as a jerk or a fool; the movie-makers take their cue from Lilli, and refuse to look down on anyone, though they see everyone's limitations.

Shortly after Lilli arrives in Eden she hooks up with a local dock worker named Mick (Colin Friels), who initially seems a good match for her. He's a struggling artist, but he's not suffering; he's amiable, but not shallow. Mick has a loose, carefree manner and a sincerity that Lilli finds appealing, but when they head off together for a weekend and he starts talking about settling down and having children and "making the best of what we've got," you can see her eyes clouding over; she's rejecting him as he speaks, and he just digs himself in deeper and deeper. Lilli rejects the conventional—that's why Mick is doomed—but she feels the pull of its appeal, so her rejection of him is quiet and tender. After an afternoon of lovemaking, she slips out on him while he sleeps.

Many of the other characters are recognizable American types. The locals and the milieu at the roadhouses are exactly what you might find in a small town in the western United States, and the touring performers—the Elvis impersonator, obviously, as well as a singer named Country Joe and Bet herself when she sings "It Had To Be You" at a local talent contest—are all consciously imitating American archetypes. It's more than a little odd, seeing how these Australians living in this cool, green, paradise-by-the-sea have so thoroughly assimilated American tastes and attitudes. It makes you pay attention to what they're doing, to find out what they see in these archetypes that makes them so universally appealing. And if you watch closely, you see that what these Australians bring to their transient lifestyle is a fresh appresiation for the looseness, the casualness and freedom of the Yankee-style trailer parks and the roadhouses. The characters in *High Tide* aren't particularly well-off, but they're not cold and hardened; they have quirks that you can understand, and they understand and appreciate one another. And this understanding extends to the film-makers as well. Mick is probably the least sympathetic major character in the movie, and even he is kissed off gently.

Judy Davis as Lilli in HIGH TIDE, *directed by Gillian Armstrong*

Armstrong prepares us for the collision between Lilli and Ally from the earliest moments, when she cuts from Lilli performing to Ally in

a wetsuit, floating suspended in a tidal pool. Lilli's distant expression while singing ties her to Ally's dream-like suspension, and the small connections the movie-makers establish between their characters help smooth over the coincidence of their meeting—we can believe that, from the first, each sees some of herself in the other without either knowing their true relationship. Their first meeting is perfectly casual and beautifully modulated: Lilli lies in a drunken stupor on the floor of the park's communal washroom, singing Bob Dylan's "Dark Eyes" in a great, low-down humming buzz of a voice, but when Ally comes out of the shower to find her lying there she isn't scared away. She helps Lilli to her feet and she and her teenage boyfriend drag Lilli back to her trailer. It's through Lilli's stagger that she develops a rapport with Ally. Up to this point we've never seen her with her intellectual defenses stripped away, and it gives her a new warmth and humanity that Ally sees and appreciates. Ally is probably used to dealing with folks at the park in Lilli's condition, but in helping her she also finds herself curiously drawn to her, and she returns to see Lilli later.

It's in these scenes that Armstrong and the performers together bring out through indirection what Jones has the good sense to leave unsaid. After she learns who Ally really is, and has been warned away once by Bet, Lilli catches Ally shaving her legs in the communal shower before a big night out and is transfixed, watching with a mixture of fascination and amusement at Ally's stoic, steel-willed persistence as she scrapes the hell out of her skin. When Bet catches her watching she circles around to confront Lilli (in a bit of staging that is perhaps too deliberately choreographed) and drives her off—later she upbraids Ally for trying to shave at all. Bet's anger at Lilli's presence gets channelled into her aggressive hold over Ally, but as Ally grows closer to her mother (without yet knowing their true relationship) she also begins to assert her will over Bet; she no longer feels so beholden to her. The relationships in this movie frequently rest on balances of power. Both Lilli and Bet fear that the other has the stronger hold over Ally, and Ally begins to feel her own strength over these two as she grows to understand their conflict. These balances are perhaps the shrewdest element in Jones's screenplay, and Armstrong underplays them perfectly; they are as subtle as the balances Robert Towne worked out for the relationships among the women in his 1981 film *Personal Best*, a movie which also treated the emotional development and interactions among a group of women with a penetrating, humanistic understanding.

Jan Adele gives weight to the cornerstone role of Bet. She's an emblem of those working mothers who've sacrificed their dreams—in Bet's case, her own dreams of becoming a nightclub singer—to take care of their children, but she isn't just an emblem; she has a rowdy liveliness. Bet would bodily haul Lilli out of town if she thought it would do any good, and if she felt 100 percent secure of her own claim over Ally. There's no question that she loves her stepdaughter, just as it's clear to her that Ally has emotional corners into which she can never reach. (That's the poignancy of her character.) The first shot of Ally afloat in that tidal pool is a measure of her psychological distance from Bet; Bet is like a very good and caring nursemaid to her, whereas she clearly means so much more to Bet. (Though this isn't at all spelled out, Ally may be Bet's connection to her dead son.) Adele makes Bet's open-hearted devotion supremely sympathetic, and her stolid simplicity provides the perfect counterweight to Davis's more complex characterization. Claudia Karvan's Ally provides the bridge between the two mothers; she knows what she loves in each one, and she gives each her due while remaining true to her own emotions. At first Karvan's reticence may strike you as inexpressiveness, but she draws you in with her small changes in mood. Ally is feeling her way to new responses when she's with Lilli, responses that weren't open to her before—she's testing her reflexes. With the tiniest flourishes Karvan makes you feel the pain and uncertainty caused by Lilli's alternating warmth and aloofness, and she brings something deeper to the way in which Ally calls Lilli "my mother" with a quiet formality after she discovers the truth. Like Adele's, Karvan's performance grows by bounds throughout the picture, right up to her final moment sitting alone in a diner, waiting for Lilli, when the movie reaches emotional high tide.

"I don't know which way you're going to jump next, and I don't think you do either," Bet tells Lilli, and we know what she means. In the hands of another actress Lilli might be one

of those "free spirits" who are highly predictable in their wildness. You know which way they'll jump—they'll be tamed, or at least grounded, by someone they love by the end of the movie. What makes Lilli so compelling is that at any point she could take off, leaving her daughter behind, and it would be totally believable in terms of Davis's portrayal. In a movie that relies on tiny shifts in mood and tone, Davis is our touchstone in scene after scene. We lock into what she's thinking, and her expressions frequently convey much more than what she's saying. From the first we never want to take our eyes off her, because she is so strikingly beautiful; then we don't want to take our eyes off her because she brings so much more to this estranged mother role than might seem possible.

With the possible exception of Diane Keaton, I can't imagine another modern actress bringing off that "Dark Eyes" scene with such simplicity and power. (It's actually very similar in tone to that moment in *Shoot the Moon* when Keaton quietly sings the Beatles to herself while sitting in a bathtub smoking a joint.) In her brief scenes at the car-repair shop Davis shifts into a more relaxed role-playing; she's the silken seductress, the honest-girl-in-trouble, and the long-suffering gamine, all believable and all within the space of a few seconds. No emotion seems closed off to her. The tension in her features—her narrow face; her wide mouth with lips that are a shade too thin to be truly sensuous; her pale, bone-china skin set off by her sharp, deep-set eyes; her slender body that, from the way she moves, seems to contain vast reserves of strength—enable Davis, with only minor shifts in expression, to register conflicting moods. Her features are in perpetual, precarious balance; the slightest emotion will jar that balance, but not into an predictable tilt. And her voice! It's a great voice, husky and throaty, but too smooth and controlled to be conventionally sexy—it seems to go off into several different directions in this movie, and they balance into a modulation that conveys both wrenching emotion and acute intelligence. Her voice, perhaps more that any other single feature, gives Davis a distinctly modern presence in this movie.

What we've missed in Davis's performances in her earlier, period films (*My Brilliant Career, A Passage to India, Kangaroo*) was the full flowering of her contemporary sensibility. Here she brings to the character of Lilli the weight of the burden of modern independence—and the craziness. Lilli has a frank self-awareness (she tells Mick bluntly, "I'm old," when they're out driving together, and she peers at herself curiously in the mirror when she's beat-out from a hangover) and a cool distance from others that can snap into warmth when she's yearning to connect. That's her sane side, but it isn't enough to enable her to sort through the mess of her life. She's aware of her confusions without being able to control them. After she has tried her series of poses on the mechanic she looks momentarily disoriented, then snaps her head as if to clear it and says "I'm going crazy." She *is* going crazy; she has too many possibilities, too many directions, and no environment in which to explore them. She's level-headed when she's focused on the moment —whether she's warming up to Ally or leaving Mick—but she can't see herself very far down the road, and it scares her. That's why she can't be sure about winning her daughter back; she isn't sure what it will bring to her, just as she doesn't know what she left behind when she abandoned Ally. "I would have been a bad mother," she tells Mick, but she looks as if she has doubts. If she could be certain of who she was, and of what she could and couldn't do, she could leave Ally without hesitation; she has the strength. But her doubts pull her back.

Lilli is a patchwork in which we may see thousands of young women, presented with so many options for the first time yet feeling themselves pulled back emotionally into the restrictive, traditional roles they thought they had finally, after hundreds of years, rid themselves of. Jones and Armstrong and producer Sandra Levy reportedly developed their story with a man in the role of the drifter, but felt that using a woman provided a untraditional perspective that gave the story a harder edge. Their instincts were right; Lilli's reasons for leaving Ally might belong to any movie character who has left his or her daughter, but the other emotions Lilli articulates come across as much tougher because Lilli is a woman. If Lilli were a man the story could easily slip into the loner-who-is-conquered-by-the-love-of-a-child genre. And the audience, however subconsciously, is probably more accepting of the idea of a man leaving his daughter upon the death of his wife;

with a father we can blame male imperative, the fear of being tied down, but how can we excuse a mother? Lilli is not easy to accept, not even in her final scene, which is only a tenuous triumph. We still don't know which way Lilli will jump after the fadeout, and we can never quite forgive that ultimate uncertainty. It's that uncertainty that makes Lilli a great character.

—STEVE WARRICK

TUCKER

Director: Francis Ford Coppola. Script: Arnold Schulman and David Seidler. Cinematography: Vittorio Storaro. Music: Joe Jackson. Paramount.

Francis Ford Coppola has been a major force in American cinema for nearly twenty years. His ambition has led him to write, direct, produce, and distribute films, not to mention running his own studio, helping other talented film-makers begin their careers, pioneering artistic and technological innovations. In his work he has tackled some major issues of our age: the Mafia in *The Godfather*, the Vietnam War in *Apocalypse Now*, electronic surveillance and privacy in *The Conversation*. In *Tucker* he has turned his focus on the quintessential American legend, the self-made inventor-businessman.

There are many reasons Coppola, a native of Detroit, undertook a biography of Preston Tucker, the maverick automobile designer-entrepreneur. His father had invested in Tucker stock when Francis was a little boy. Carmine Coppola continued to believe in him even when he lost his money and the press vilified Tucker as a fraud and scoundrel. Francis himself is an automobile enthusiast and enjoys innovative gadgetry in any medium. His love of design is evident even in the trailer that has been his mobile headquarters since *One from the Heart*, the custom-designed "Silverfish" with its smooth, reflective chrome skin and mirrored one-way glass. What further appealed to Coppola about Tucker was that he had engineered a car which not only sported a daring design with a streamlined chassis and a cyclops headlight, but also offered such safety features as pop-out windshield, seat belts, disc brakes, padded dashboard, fuel injection, and an air-cooled rear engine, which preceded Detroit's adoption of these features by a generation.

An entrepreneur with taste and a concern for his public, a mechanical innovator with big dreams and little capital, an outsider taking on the big boys and being defeated by them—the terms all seem to describe Coppola's own career as film-maker. He already had *Tucker* on the drawing boards at the time he founded his short-lived Zoetrope Studios. But his meteoric rise and fall as studio head enriched his vision of Tucker, the failed empire builder. Jeff Bridges who plays the charismatic lead has spoken of how valuable Francis's stories about Zoetrope were to the cast for creating the atmosphere of an enterprise where people were constantly challenged and threatened by new ideas. And while the film-maker has underplayed the similarities between the automaker's life and his own—saying that every movie reflects the director the way water takes the shape of the glass it fills—clearly *Tucker* faithfully echoes the style, aspirations, and experiences of Coppola the film-maker. When Tucker walks around an empty building where his plant is to go, we see Coppola on his newly acquired lot. The casting of Frederick Forrest as Tucker's chief mechanic evokes the personal struggles of Coppola, since the actor had been his mainstay in a number of movies, including *Apocalypse Now* and *Hammett*. Tucker's son asking to work for his father is a haunting reminder of the director's eldest son Gio, to whom the film is dedicated, who had been Francis's key apprentice until his accidental death on location. But it is the movie-making process which is symbolized by the manufacturing of cars. Tucker's head of business affairs Abe Karatz is stunned when he overhears Preston saying that all he needs is $15 million *and* a car in order to realize his dreams. Tucker had promoted his idea so successfully that everyone assumed he had a model car built and that all he needed was the money to mass produce it. When people keep asking him "Do we have a car?" producers and directors hear the studio executives asking "Do we have a star?"—the key ingredient to turning an idea into a multi-million-dollar reality.

But Coppola's need to make the movie is still not explained totally by his love of cars, admiration of a visionary entrepreneur, or his autobiographical urge. *Tucker* is an ambitious work—in it the film-maker undertook the examination of a major American archetype and did so in the spirit and style of American cinema of the forties. Coppola said that he

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Unveiling the "Tucker Torpedo"

made this movie in the spirit of Frank Capra, but it is even more a tribute to and reinterpretation of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*.

As the thinly disguised biography of William Randolph Hearst, Welles's masterpiece presented the life of a media baron with enormous personal power. Kane had inherited a sizable fortune, which he expanded into one of the great financial empires of his times. Tucker, of modest means but with a similarly enormous ego, was a self-made man who dreamed of a superior car and raised a fortune to produce it. Kane ended a rich and powerful man, who had sacrificed too much of himself to create his empire. Tucker went broke, but in Coppola's version he had been successful. "What difference does it make if we produce fifty or fifty million?" he asks at the end when a jury acquits him of fraud, but too late to save his plant. He answers himself, "It's only machinery. It's the idea, the dream that counts." And now he is speaking not only of inventors, entrepreneurs, film-makers, but all of us.

Hearst for Welles and Tucker for Coppola were charismatic entrepreneurs of their childhood who embodied for them the American ethos. (In his final address to the jury Tucker says that *he* was born a generation too late, for the opportunities that existed for his idols were being denied to him.) Welles presented his dark star of the American firmament with a grand, sweeping cinematic style. His film reeks of the self-confidence of an unchallenged, powerful nation. Coppola's vision is commensurate with his subject and his times. It has been tempered by the Depression, but it still exudes that American optimism which admits no limits to a man's dreams. When Tucker fails, the fault lies with the Big Three of Detroit who are scheming to shut him out, not with himself. The film speaks to an era in which the kind of individual enterprise that is being praised and rewarded is that of Trump, Boesky, and corporate raiders, rather than inventors and innovators.

The failure of Tucker's enterprise reminds us of the folding of the innovative Zoetrope Studio. For Coppola, Tucker was a success on his own terms and according to the judgment of history. His innovations did become the standard features of automobiles a generation later. And the fact that he was cut off by the Big Three of Detroit only makes his story more appealing. Nothing pleases the American public more than the underdog, the fighter with principles, the individual steamrollered by a repressive system. It is that populist spirit which gives the film its flavor, which indeed makes it *feel* more like Frank Capra than Orson Welles. If Welles gave us the archetypal robber baron in *Citizen Kane*, Coppola created the twentieth-century American Adam in *Tucker* —a man with an exuberant belief in his ability to realize his dreams, the film-maker's own role model.

Like *Citizen Kane*, *Tucker* starts out with a documentary about the man, its short shots summarizing his achievements and giving a sense of his creative energy. Unlike Kane's posthumous newsreel, it is a promotion film to be used to attract investors to the fledgling com-

pany. Coppola keeps returning to this publicity film throughout the picture, in content and in style, here using the narrator to advance the plot, there superimposing on the image of a brand new automobile the slogan "Buy a Tucker—Don't let the future pass you by." At times the distinctions between promotion film and narrative dissolve since Tucker's enterprise is driven by self-promotion. The commercial film crew is in the background of many scenes, recording the goings-on. We see the last of this publicity film quite late in the picture, when its director is screening it for Tucker and his friends at home. From then on Coppola opts for straightforward story-telling in order to accentuate the car-maker's material destruction and spiritual triumph at his trial. Then again, the entrepreneur's demise is not the stuff of promo films. The final image of the Tucker emblem seals the story and recalls the promo film-within-a-film that played tag with the narrative throughout the movie.

Coppola plays with cinematic style here as he has in all his movies. But the emphasis seems to be greater because he is paying tribute to the movies of the forties and maybe because his subject is a driven designer. Like Kane, Tucker is a human dynamo, with such enthusiasm and self-confidence that he takes in good news and bad with the same unflappable optimism. The energy of the acting is matched by rapid action and cutting. Faces are shot in extreme close-up, from unusual angles, and in high contrast to emphasize their emotions, at times to the point of caricature, reminiscent of the expressionistic style of *Citizen Kane*. Phones are ringing, people are talking at the same time—so great is the pressure to get the funds, set up the plant, build the cars. Coppola even quotes from *Citizen Kane* specifically—the famous transition that spans years when Thatcher says "Merry Christmas" to the boy Charles opening a package. The picture cuts to the boy responding with a sullen "Merry Christmas" and cuts again to a considerably older Thatcher saying "And a Happy New Year!" as he dictates a letter to Kane on his twenty-first birthday. The time period covered is shorter in *Tucker* but the effect is the same when Abe Karatz describes the new plant in the family home and Coppola cuts, showing Tucker rise from his kitchen chair, exclaim "It's perfect!" and walk the length of the plant, camera tracking with him. Coppola's delight in technical bravura, echoing that of Welles, emerges even as he breaks with cinematic convention. Instead of the split screen, used to show two simultaneous actions in different places—as when two people talk to each other on the phone—Coppola builds two totally different sets next to each other, separated by a flat, and dazzles us by smoothly tracking his camera from one set to the other, casually revealing the divider.

What forms the most powerful link between *Citizen Kane* and *Tucker* is the way in which their directors have created protean figures of these American legends. To Thatcher's admonishment of the young Kane manufacturing fanciful headlines, the cocky baby tycoon retorts, "I don't know how to run a newspaper, Mr. Thatcher. I just try everything I can think of." When a young soldier comes to his porch with suggestions to improve his car, Tucker promptly makes him the engineering department. Both men grab ideas, people, opportunities wherever they can in order to further their goals of realizing their dream, building their empire. In that they are reflections of their creators, Welles and Coppola, who have built a body of artistically innovative films through their no-holds-barred approach to film-making. Their stylistic bravura is the appropriate language for films about two expansive American entrepreneurs. In giving us *Citizen Kane* and *Tucker*, Orson Welles and Francis Coppola have revealed much of themselves to us. They are American originals, obsessed by the power of the creative individual, who have produced movies of mass appeal by stamping them with their own style and vision of American greatness.

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The Annual FQ Roundup

Once again, we attempt below to survey all English-language film books from roughly the past year that have not yet been reviewed in our pages.

This ambition seems quixotic to some readers, who feel we should concentrate on those books we deem particularly worthy, and give them extended treatment while ignoring the rest. But it seems valuable to many more, who tell us they relish the opportunity to get some concentrated sense of the year's work, and who are aware that many quite valuable books might still not rate "star" status high enough to be placed among the dozen or so best books of the year. An additional factor is that so few film books have been receiving review, in the past several years especially, from other journals.

We have tried this year to give our usual coverage to a large number of titles (a few, of course, are still out for review and some may not have come to our attention or been sent to us by their publishers). We have omitted from listings a dozen or so which, as best we can tell, would not interest our readers—people we take to have what might be termed "a serious interest in film as an art." The omitted titles are mostly autobiographies and biographies, and researchers seeking such materials will easily find them through normal bibliographic channels.

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A practical note: we provide standard source information for most books, giving publisher addresses when the source is likely to be hard to locate. If you cannot find a book in your local bookstores, many publishers maintain 800 numbers on which you can place orders using a charge card. (Using a charge card is indeed the simplest method for Europeans who wish to order American books; Visa and Mastercard are international institutions, and avoid problems of exchange rates, money orders, etc.) *Books in Print*, available in most libraries and many bookstores, provides addresses for established publishers.

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Spiegel, Alan. *Spiegel: The Man Behind The Pictures*. New York: Little, Brown, 1988. $17.95. Sinclair describes Spiegel as Hollywood's last true Tycoon—"devious, driven, dominating, egomaniacal, unprincipled, immoral, and a bully and sybarite who made it a matter of principle never to pay any personal bill that could be finessed or ignored." In short, a hundred times more interesting than today's producer-accountants. In a book that wafts between heavy anecdote and lightweight scholarship some lovely stories emerge. Yes, you knew that he gave up his conveyor belt of young women when he was in his eighties, had criminal convictions in several countries, but did you know he was a "Young Pioneer" and went to dig up the land in Palestine? Spiegel never ran a studio. He was a manipulator and filmmaker, not a manager. He made many films and left four classics, whose genesis is fairly well described. *African Queen* was the best, but *Lawrence of Arabia* an amazing tour de force. David Lean still gets the *kudos* but Sam was the motor. *Spiegel* might not be literature, but it's great airplane reading, especially when you imagine Bob Hoskins in the part.

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Ward, Carol M. *Mae West: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989. $39.95. A thoughtful study of the special appeals of Mae West—more complex and sexually ambiguous than they seemed—and a survey of her genuinely independent life, with its remarkably single-minded success in promoting and defending her sexual image.—E.C.

Criticism

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Here is yet another lengthy study from the prolific Wisconsin professor. How does he do it?

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Here is yet another lengthy study from the prolific Wisconsin professor. How does he do it?

True, Bordwell builds on previous work, including papers on Ozu and such books as *Film Art: An Introduction* (with Kristin Thompson) and especially *Narration in the Fiction Film*; but his new research is both extensive and detailed, including frame-by-frame studies of all of the extant Ozu films and references to copious print sources, many in Japanese. The only evident—and trivial—limitation on this research is the fact that nearly all of the Japanese literary references come from secondary sources.

The book is divided into two main sections. In the first, Bordwell discusses Ozu's work as a whole against the background of his life and Japanese society. He also examines other critics' views on the distinctive features of Ozu's work and presents his own conclusions. The second section consists of a chronologically ordered analysis of each of Ozu's films, including at least a synopsis of those that are not known to have survived.

Reading the book is made easy by excellent production. The type is clear, and the page layout (as in Bordwell's earlier books) allows frame enlargements to be grouped on the spread where they are discussed. The enlargements themselves, though smaller than many in *Narration*, are crisper and more legible. There is only a handful of typographical errors throughout the book, and a little editorial confusion with characters' names. (On page 279 Sugiko should be Tokiko; on pages 303 and 305 Chieko should be Akiko; on page 311, Hatori should be Somiya. Bordwell occasionally adds to the confusion by using different forms of characters' names.)

Drawing on concepts developed in *Narrative in the Fiction Film*, Bordwell identifies Ozu as a master of the parametric narrative film. In other words, the distinctive quality of Ozu's films lies not in their thematic material (the family, *aware*, "Japaneseness," Zen Buddhism, etc.) or in their superficial stylistic features, such as low camera position and the eventual elimination of opticals and camera movement, but in their formal patterns. According to Bordwell, Ozu's self-imposed constraints on subject matter and technique were arbitrary decisions that gave him the freedom to develop complex sets of structural relations—symmetries, parallels, and cycles—that often entail narrative delays, misdirections, and ellipses. This persuasive thesis is buttressed in both parts of the book with detailed scene breakdowns and frame enlargements.

Bordwell acknowledges his debt to Donald Richie, whose 1974 study *Ozu* noted the frequency of parallels and other formal patterns in his films. For Richie, however, these elements were subordinate to character and emotion; Bordwell, while briefly acknowledging that Ozu can legitimately be appreciated in terms such as Richie's, reverses the emphasis. At the same time, he does not ignore the fact that Ozu lived in a particular society during a particularly tumultuous era. The first part of the book carefully relates Ozu and his work to Japanese culture, to historical developments and to the film-making styles of his contemporaries, including the Americans he most admired. The second part of the book, although focusing primarily on the formal structure of the individual films, also cites pertinent extrafilmic influences and conditions (see, for example, the discussion of the role of wartime propaganda constraints on the 1942 *There Was a Father*).

There are some crucial omissions, beginning with the lack of a general analysis of the role of sound in Ozu's work. It is only fair to point out, first, that hardly any study would satisfy my high estimate of the importance of film sound and, second, that when Bordwell does turn to Ozu's use of sound he discusses it with great sensitivity. However, it seems odd by any standards not to devote a separate section to the role of sound in the work of a film-maker who is best known for his sound films yet directed a much larger number of silent films. What effect did the inclusion of a sound track have on his maturing style? (According to Bordwell's Appendix, the average shot length more than doubled in the sound films.) Is Ozu's use of sound also parametric? Even when discussing *Floating Weeds*, the sound remake of the silent *Story of Floating Weeds*, Bordwell compares the two films almost exclusively in visual terms, mentioning sound in only four sentences. Yet a brief but perceptive analysis of the music in *Equinox Flower* (p. 69) suggests what this study could have gained by addressing such questions.

Other omissions are spotlighted when Bordwell assails Noël Burch's analysis of *Woman of Tokyo*. "Finally, Burch says that in the film's epilogue, the reporters go out of the shot before

the cut, and they do not. . . . [I]f Ozu's work exemplifies Zen, as Burch claims the last sequence does, then one can use this gaseous generalization to avoid analyzing what . . . structurally motivates the conclusion." It so happens that my notes on *Woman of Tokyo* agree with Burch's description. My notes are not based on a frame-by-frame study, so they too may very well be in error. But there are other possible reasons for the discrepancy, and they raise basic issues that Bordwell neglects.

First, we may have seen different prints of the film, one (or both) defective. Nowhere does Bordwell discuss the provenance or condition of the prints he analyzes. While his book on Dreyer began with a warning about the dubious authenticity of many prints, *Ozu* offers only an acknowledgment of various archives; and for all except one of the films listed in the Appendix the data are based on 16mm prints. Yet Bordwell's analyses of Ozu's shot structure are often absolutely precise as to shot order (e.g., his critique of a shot breakdown by Richie on p. 394, note 86) and sometimes precise within a half dozen frames as to length (e.g., p. 75). While the examples are too copious and varied for the question of print authenticity to jeopardize Bordwell's thesis, his silence does leave the reader to struggle with intermittent doubt.

Second, in the *Woman of Tokyo* epilogue, the reporters might still be partly in frame at the end of the shot, but their trajectory combined with the cut makes them appear—in projection—to have completely exited. The issue raised here is whether frame-by-frame analysis should supplement or substitute for viewing (and listening to) films as normally projected. I'm sure Bordwell would not recommend substitution, but after so many rewarding hours of image scrutiny his remarks can seem ambiguous: "I believe [Ozu's] parametric aspect to be so important [because] it involves the most extensive retraining of the spectator. . . . [W]e must adopt new viewing strategies. . . ." (p. 178)

In his own parametric style, Bordwell amplifies this issue more clearly in his earlier *Narration* than in *Ozu*: "When a powerful and internally consistent style refuses conventional schemata for producing narrative meaning, we are tantalized into projecting other schemata onto it. . . . Without leisure to linger, the viewer may also attribute ineffability to the ungraspable differences generated by the style." The warning against jumping to conclusions about Zen and the like is well sounded; but does this mean we must forgo conclusions *after* having analyzed the style (or having had it analyzed for us)? Ultimately, the knowledge that Bordwell sets out in such detail must be absorbed into our experience of the films as projected. For this reason, while Bordwell offers a valuable corrective to Richie's approach, Richie's remains a valuable corrective to Bordwell's. Richie begins with the writing of the script and shows how it takes shape as a film; Bordwell removes the film from the screen for dissection.

There is an inverse relationship between the positive qualities of *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* and the amount of space I have devoted to what I see as its faults. My emphasis on the latter stems largely from my respect for the former: I would like to see this indispensable study freed from its unnecessary blemishes.

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ERIC ROHMER: REALIST AND MORALIST

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At last, in English, a proper book on Rohmer. 1988!

Eric Rohmer succeeds its author's previous New-Wave study, *François Truffaut* (1972). It has all the academic virtues, including bibliography and filmography (but only through 1984 and *Full Moon in Paris*). Books like this, that get the facts right, are often accused of being critically unsophisticated. But in fact what Crisp says about most of the major films is ingenious and perceptive. He's very good on visuals and on the thematic contrasts in Rohmer; see what he has to say on color effects in *La Collectioneuse* and *My Night at Maud's*, or on script development in *Claire's Knee*.

If you have been tempted, as I have been, to see *Pauline at the Beach* as only a beach-bunny remake of *La Collectioneuse*, Crisp shows us a much stronger carryover from *Claire's Knee*. The commercially unsuccessful first Rohmer feature we can't see here in the States, *Le Signe du Lion*, turns out to be a bridge film in that,

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Crisp says, it shows much more clearly than the later features what Rohmer absorbed from his hero Rossellini. The later features, in Crisp's view, find their base in Murnau's *Sunrise*, which showed Rohmer what a sophisticated director could do with the Good Girl–Bad Girl plot.

Crisp spends the first third of his text preparing for his discussion of Rohmer's breakthrough film, *La Collectioneuse* (1967). This is because Crisp needs a critical wrapup of Rohmer's extensive editorial-critical work, both in and outside *Cahiers*, to help argue his own book's main thesis. To wit, that Rohmer worked out, in ideological sympathy with but independently of Bazin, first the viewpoint and then the techniques (which Crisp wrongly regards as minimalist) to make films mainly about secular characters in a mainly secular world, which yet draw Catholic morals from Catholic metaphysical assumptions. The social realism of the films, obviously excepting *Perceval*, is only a technical convention by which we follow very fallible heroes who will finally reject the surface attractions of variety and "freedom" for stability. Crisp works this thesis sensitively for each film. *Perceval* defeats him as a critic totally, but he only wastes five pages on it.

Crisp's prose style will make no one turn the pages frantically, but his writing does not actively impede what he wants to tell us until the final chapter. Things get clogged here because he deludes himself into thinking he can, in one chapter, solve the determinism–free will issue. This comes in because he's arguing that the whole New Wave film phenomenon was economically predictable from postwar international changes in the film industry—a really tricky thesis to argue from a subject like Rohmer's films, which have no equivalent elsewhere.

In sum, *Eric Rohmer* becomes immediately an essential book for any fan of the director. And for that very large film-academic group which profoundly distrusts the films as too lightweight to be "serious," they now at least have a reliable reference in Crisp, to help get a handle on Rohmer.

As a book, *Eric Rohmer* does have its oddities and limitations. Most striking is the profound temperamental antipathy Crisp has for his subject, most unusual in a pioneering study. A film-buff acquaintance of mine, not a Rohmer fan, browsed through my review copy and drew the immediate conclusion that Crisp hates Rohmer's guts. As is spelled out in the final wrapup chapter, Crisp wants to take a director with Rohmer's (and Bresson's) Catholic sympathies seriously, but not *too* seriously, not like a Godard or a Truffaut. This negativism causes Crisp some critical problems. While very interesting and helpful on theme in the films, *Eric Rohmer* regularly misses basic elements like plot and characterization, which are not beyond Rohmer's regular audiences. Crisp inclines for example to abstract the leading women in the Moral Tales as merely sympathetic or unsympathetic; whereas viewers, obviously like Rohmer himself, find them all, including the Bad Girl layabouts, an amusing and attractive means of helping along the hero's moral education.

Crisp takes all the negative things Rohmer and Bazin had to say about quick film editing in their criticism as signifying a lack of interest in technique. This seems to me a very peculiar critical reaction to Rohmer's subtlety of camera placement and script preparation—all thoroughly documented by Crisp himself. The one technical invention Rohmer has by now almost patented, the Unreliable Narrator, rather unsettles Crisp, partly because he takes the insider criticism of us intellectuals in the films as a mere symptom of Rohmer's "Catholic" anti-intellectualism.

Crisp seems split between his solid research accomplishment and a continual nervous theoretical effort to preserve the old Godard-Truffaut party line about the New Wave. This party line surfaced very early over here (indeed, before most of the best NW films had yet been shot). It has confused the history both of how *Cahiers du Cinéma* was actually edited, and where the most interesting formal developments in European film took place. Crisp for example treats Rohmer as critically derivative from Truffaut, yet on the same page (17) retells us what we already know from Jim Hillier: that Rohmer ideologically dominated the magazine in its most influential years, much more than Godard or Truffaut. And Rohmer's own important critical accomplishment—the enormously influential treatment of Hitchcock in collaboration with Chabrol—Crisp omits discussing. But what a pleasure to argue with

someone like Crisp who tells us so much about so many amusing films!

Those who want more on the subject than Crisp, and can read French, should know that despite an earlier publication date Joel Magny's *Eric Rohmer* (Paris: 1986) takes both the films and the critical literature two years further.

—JAMES MARK PURCELL

RADICAL INNOCENCE
A Critical Study of the Hollywood Ten

By Bernard F. Dick. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988. $27.00.

Because the Hollywood Ten were and remain the only example in United States history of a group of artists or intellectuals tried, convicted, and jailed because they refused to reveal their political beliefs to a committee of Congress, they will always remain subjects of importance and interest for anyone interested in civil liberties, the First Amendment, and attempts at thought control by official government agencies and extra-legal, self-appointed guardians of "patriotism."

The men who became the Hollywood Ten were also artists and workers. Seven earned their living as screen writers, two as screen directors, one as a screen producer—that is, they were craftsmen employed in a hybrid industrial world of art, entertainment, and profit. Prior to, during, and after their years in Hollywood, they authored short stories, novels, plays, and nonfiction, and one of them, Herbert Biberman, directed *Salt of the Earth*, the one movie made by Hollywood people of that era that directly addressed trade unionism, women's rights, and minority rights.

Bernard F. Dick has provided a detailed assessment of the Ten's creative output. His findings complete the pictures previously given of the Ten. He has done an excellent job of research, covering all of the varied artistic endeavors (with several exceptions, noted below) and delving into the studio archives to extract interesting data on the vagaries of a script between conception and film product. Although his critical comments are occasionally too relentlessly academic, his evaluations are reasonable.

I note the omissions, not to niggle, but because they round out the work of the Ten and indicate a major gap in Dick's approach—his failure to analyze the political context in which the Ten lived and worked. But one of the omissions is also aesthetically relevant. Dick does not devote any space to a discussion of Dalton Trumbo's letters (*Additional Dialogue*, 1970). Trumbo was one of the most scathingly funny letter writers of his era. Arguably, it was the genre best suited to his talents. Since Dick regards similar sarcastic diatribes from Trumbo's diary (about Stanley Kubrick's revisions of *Spartacus*) as "Trumbo's infantilism," it is not surprising that the letters held little appeal for him. The parodies of the director's name provided by Dick, however, strike me as hilarious: "Young Doctor Kubrick, Stanley Kupper, Stanley Kupprock, P. Saratoga Kubric, Stanley Pepper, Stanwick Kubrick."

Dick also does not discuss the speech Trumbo made when he accepted the Laurel Award—for a distinguished writing career—from the Writers Guild of America. This "only victims" speech provoked controversy among the Ten as to what they had done and why, and it is an integral part of their history. It also is a key indicator of the major differences between them, but more about that later.

Less important in the great scheme of mainstream work, but interesting to the connoisseur, is Herbert Biberman's direction of the movie produced by Hollywood Communists to help raise funds for the Ten's defense. It is pure propaganda, but it would be difficult to discover a more prescient movie of that or any other decade, as one by one the Ten warn the viewers of what is coming. Since it is the closest approach to filmed "agit-prop" the Ten made, an analysis of its technique and comparison of it to documentaries of the period would have been useful.

There are two omissions from the oeuvre of Albert Maltz, and an instance of over-brevity. One omission is understandable. Maltz told very few people that he had written what was arguably one of the most important Hollywood Westerns, one that changed the way in which Hollywood depicted Native Americans (*Broken Arrow*), while he was blacklisted. His then friend, Michael Blankfort, fronted for him. But Dick has shortchanged Maltz in the political arena, not mentioning his collection of political writings (*The Citizen Writer*, 1950) and devot-

someone like Crisp who tells us so much about so many amusing films!

Those who want more on the subject than Crisp, and can read French, should know that despite an earlier publication date Joel Magny's *Eric Rohmer* (Paris: 1986) takes both the films and the critical literature two years further.

—JAMES MARK PURCELL

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There is a chronology, bibliography, and filmography for each man.

—LARRY CEPLAIR

KING VIDOR, AMERICAN

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The first in-depth account of Vidor's half-century-long career, treating him as a representative American, full of the conflicting generosity and ferocity in the national ethos: with his violent mixture of pioneering optimism and *noir* torments, of transcendentalism and puritanism, of spiritual verve and physical practicality, of liberal conscience and Social Darwinist savagery, of male dominance and female conciliation. Never narrowly auteurist, *King Vidor, American* is a wide-ranging integration of film history, political thought, and popular culture. It puts into a complex cultural perspective such classic works as *The Big Parade, The Crowd, Hallelujah!*; a key woman's drama, *Stella Dallas*; and the epic Western, *Duel in the Sun*.

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The strength of *Film and Politics in the Third World* is the way in which it draws attention to the wealth of totally varied achievement throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America: mainstream and "parallel" cinemas, commercial blockbusters and examples of oppositional filmic practice, carefully wrought fusions of diverse cultures and rigidly dogmatic attempts to impose a purely "national" style. This anthology demonstrates clearly the limitations of arguments propounded by advocates of "third cinema" who "tend to speak as though there were only one type of film—liberatory—made in the 'Third World'" (p. 315). But accepting Downing's argument on this point does not, I trust, mean that one has to go along with the singularly off-putting neologism he employs to designate the output of the ubiquitous commercial entertainment industries: "fulp" (i.e., film + pulp). This term is particularly unfortunate since the anthology rightly demonstrates that there is work of quality within the commercial industries of the Third World, just as in Hollywood. Elsewhere Downing stresses the need for linguistic precision, rightly pointing out that all the terms we employ—beginning with "Third World" itself—are emotionally loaded and so need to be handled with care. Downing's short but densely packed Afterword brings together many of the themes crucial to any discussion of Third World film-making: cultural and economic domination, difficulties of funding, ambiguous relationships with the state, the need to create new audiences as well as new films. He rightly stresses how his chosen critics help clarify how "cinematic movements fit within their own national, historical and even institutional realities" (p. 311), to which I would simply add that the critics need to locate themselves with similar clarity. Most of Downing's non-US critics are exiles—like so many of the film-makers they discuss—and it is highly indicative of differing traditions of imperial domination (which cannot fail to color a critic's responses) that Downing discusses in terms of a North/South interaction what we, in Europe, tend to think of as an East/West divide.

Finally, there is the question of "influence," to which Downing and several other writers in the anthology refer. It is all too easy to assume that influence travels only in one direction (North to South or West to East) and in this connection one of my favorite stories is that told tongue-in-cheek about the great pioneer Egyptian film-maker, Kamal Selim, by Salah Abou Seif, who was clearly tired of being constantly asked about Italian neorealist influence on Egyptian cinema. "I remember very well," Abou Seif told a French interviewer, "that Kamal Selim sold a certain Stoloff the synopsis of a film which related the misadventures of a poor man who had lost a cow which was his only breadwinner. In my view it was this synopsis which formed the basis of the film *Bicycle Thieves* that De Sica made in Italy in 1948. The cow was replaced by the bicycle, given the difference between Egypt and Italy."

—ROY ARMES

WAR STARS
The Superweapon and the American Imagination

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postwar period. While Franklin shows the dialectical relationship between the fictive products of imagination (science-fiction film and literature) and American history, his emphasis here, despite the numerous books and films touched on, is on the political and material consequences of an ideological position and national self-image. This book might be seen as a radical response to contemporary meditations on the nuclear bomb, including the ballyhooed PBS documentary *War and Peace in the Nuclear Age*; Franklin's work is by far more outspoken and compelling since it strikes at the heart of some entrenched political assumptions reaching far back in the American experience.

Franklin's thesis is that American culture has always demonstrated a profound fascination with and unbridled faith in technology, on the belief that technological "miracles," particularly those achieved by a few inspired "geniuses," would help lead the nation to utopia. *War Stars* shows how this faith, as metaphyical as notions of Manifest Destiny, bolstered America's drive for conquest of territory and placed science itself under the umbrella of the country's divinely ordained mission to expand (indeed, the word "conquest" figures prominently not only in American science fiction but in historical documents, all of which nonchalantly assert the right to overpower and control other people and nations). The book's title is not a gratuitous pun; it spotlights Franklin's interest in the American glorification of the technology of death. *War Stars*' well-documented and rigorous argument shows how mythologized figures such as Fulton and Edison (who figure prominently in most "Great Man" accounts of American history) were pragmatic businessmen whose inventions were as much involved in destroying civilization as improving it. Edison, both as myth and historical figure, emerges as a symbol of American greed, opportunism, and moral hypocrisy, masquerading behind a self-righteous and highly contradictory public image.

Central to Franklin's argument is his assertion that America has consistently believed in technology's ability to produce an "ultimate" weapon which would make war impossible. This idea, which separates science from political and historical processes, was centered first on the steam warship, the torpedo, and the submarine. Franklin shows how the jingoism and naivete within this fixation extended to the airplane, the nuclear bomb, and finally Reagan's SDI/Star Wars project, which promises to "render obsolete" (a familiar phrase) previous technologies and weaponry in general. The logic that suggests more weapons will mean less weapons is born, according to Franklin, out of a conscience that refuses to question its basic premises. One of Franklin's most important points is that Americans have shown an unhealthy interest in mass destruction and the suffering that could be imposed on others, at the same time that they profess interest in technology as a path toward world peace. Numerous apocalyptic books and films (including a World War II Disney movie called *Victory through Air Power*, a rather prescient account of the total annihilation of Japan) provide the book's evidence of this popular preoccupation. Franklin's account of the totally unjustified Hiroshima bombing returns his analysis to the political sphere. Especially interesting is his depiction of Truman, who has in recent years benn romanticized as our great "common-sense" president. Truman is portrayed as a representative example of the American mindset, fascinated by the terrible power of the new technology but certain it can only serve productive ends in American hands, as hundreds of thousands are (rather casually) condemned to death.

At the heart of Franklin's argument are two basic points dependent on Marxist analyses of American culture and post-Frankfurt School notions of scientific progress. The most visible point is America's disastrous commitment to individualism, both in the idea of scientific genius and the primacy of charismatic authority, and in individualism as collective ego—that is, in America's perceived responsibility only to itself in its use of science for empire-building. The second, more pessimistic idea resonating in the book is the close association of science and death apparent in American art and history. This recalls the skepticism Adorno and Horkheimer (in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*) aimed at instrumental reason and the idea of progress, although Franklin's argument gains a specific and original force by its marshalling of evidence which almost parodies itself. The books and films which have entered into popular and official discourse ("Star Wars" was, of course, originally a movie title) have a suicidal under-

pinning which has not yet been brought fully into view. While today we see films such as *The Atomic Cafe* and *The Day After*, there is little evidence that the American attitude toward the role of weapons in human interchange has shifted. Franklin closes by hoping that our descendants will see the fascination with death technology as a peculiar aberration in human history; given the long history that this book traces, such hope seems unfounded.

—CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT

FRITZ LANG
Genre and Representation in His American Films

By Reynold Humphries. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

This sometimes brilliant and often maddening book implicitly argues the superiority of Fritz Lang's American period. Humphries opts not to discuss certain titles beloved by other admirers of the American Lang (e.g., *The Big Heat* and *Clash by Night*, "a grotesque and unintentionally funny submelodrama") from "a desire to de-center the dominant discussions of Lang and to recenter them elsewhere." Yes, the book's French origins, in Humphries's 1982 volume (*Fritz Lang cinéaste américain*) and before that in a 1979 dissertation under Christian Metz, are not entirely hidden in the syntax of his own translation and revision. Still, his semi-psychoanalytic analysis of "the Langian textual system" has the dynamic result of replacing passive critical concepts of "fate" and "destiny" with a focus on how Lang's manipulation of Hollywood film language implicates the spectator in shifting ways of seeing.

There is surely no other Hollywood director for whom this approach so resuscitates neglected films. (Hitchcock's American films have glossy tourist compensations for any spectators squirming under an *auteur* obsessed by "looking.") Lang's cold and precise stylistic choices welcome shot-by-shot readings, unhindered by the "noise" of human quirks savored in, say, Jean Renoir's two originals for Lang's American remakes. Too, Lang's characters themselves are often observed observers—the investigators or decoders, the victims or perpetrators of paranoia, characters who bring into the storyline itself all the problems in "the look." Humphries's great skill lies in combining sophisticated background in psychoanalytic and film theories with a keen cinemagoer's eye for subtle doublings of signifiers—lighting, decor, clothing, and gesture that so often in Lang bind together characters otherwise morally worlds apart. The book builds from a Lacanian-influenced theory of narrative and toward ever closer readings (the significance of gold-tinted fades in *Moonfleet* occupies several pages); it reaches its sharpest focus in chapters on three 1940s films about dreamers, neurotics and psychotics—films in which "the unconscious of the text" stretches out comfortably on the couch of psychoanalysis: *the Woman in the Window*, *House by the River*, and *Secret Beyond the Door*.

Those suggestive close readings, tied to subtleties in shifting point of view, scream out for frame enlargements. (The few badly identified and reproduced frames are not sufficient to ward off occasional vertigo.) The book's title, too, is something of a puzzle. "Representation" presumably covers analysis of film codes as well as the ideology that "film is a representation of a representation," but anyone coming here to grasp the complex relationship between Lang's films and established Hollywood genres may be disappointed. When discussed at all, genre comes in for quirky treatment: *film noir*—presumed to be a genre—is pushed back into the thirties to account for lighting elements usually thought of as expressionist; the question with the 1943 films *Hangmen Also Die* and *The Ministry of Fear* becomes whether to place them within the thriller or anti-Nazi genres—an unpromising exploration more rationally resolved by locating the anti-Nazi films as a time-specific *cycle* across several genres (hence the Range Busters in *Cowboy Commandos*, also 1943).

Humphries reserves his sharpest barbs not for those who favor Lang's German films (benighted Noël Burch "has not the foggiest notion of what Hollywood is") but for those who see a social thesis within his work, those who fixate on the lynching in *Fury*, the anti-Nazism in *Hangmen Also Die*. It is, no doubt, "superficial and misleading" to leap from storyline to social theme, bypassing film form. But it's another sleight of hand to presume that unraveling codes within the film text therefore

pinning which has not yet been brought fully into view. While today we see films such as *The Atomic Cafe* and *The Day After*, there is little evidence that the American attitude toward the role of weapons in human interchange has shifted. Franklin closes by hoping that our descendants will see the fascination with death technology as a peculiar aberration in human history; given the long history that this book traces, such hope seems unfounded.

—CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT

FRITZ LANG
Genre and Representation in His American Films

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This sometimes brilliant and often maddening book implicitly argues the superiority of Fritz Lang's American period. Humphries opts not to discuss certain titles beloved by other admirers of the American Lang (e.g., *The Big Heat* and *Clash by Night*, "a grotesque and unintentionally funny submelodrama") from "a desire to de-center the dominant discussions of Lang and to recenter them elsewhere." Yes, the book's French origins, in Humphries's 1982 volume (*Fritz Lang cinéaste américain*) and before that in a 1979 dissertation under Christian Metz, are not entirely hidden in the syntax of his own translation and revision. Still, his semi-psychoanalytic analysis of "the Langian textual system" has the dynamic result of replacing passive critical concepts of "fate" and "destiny" with a focus on how Lang's manipulation of Hollywood film language implicates the spectator in shifting ways of seeing.

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prevents acknowledgement of themes, or, in other terms, that Lang's shifty, doubled signifiers can't settle into signifieds once the film has spooled through. As much as semio-psychoanalytic studies of "the gaze" in film (both within the diegesis and between spectator and screen) might be said to have led to gains that are "staggering" (a word of praise Humphries bestows at various points, without irony, on Lacan, Metz, Roland Barthes, and Stephen Heath), the limitations of the approach are pretty sharply revealed here. It's not so much that Humphries's discoveries about Lang's way with film codes aren't convincing as that one wants him to follow the argument out.

Surprisingly, for instance, Humphries doesn't push analysis of "the look" very far into cultural questions of gender roles, developing instead a psychoanalytic reading of codes and characters within the text. If that yields up genuine insight about Lang's manipulation of spectator identification, it finally comes to seem hermetic rather than focused and leads Humphries to misread, perhaps willfully, scenes key to his argument. *Secret Beyond the Door* is deftly approached as a film whose "conscious project is subverted by its unconscious project" —that is, its half-baked Hollywood Freudian success-story, in which Joan Bennett "cures" her obsessively neurotic husband Michael Redgrave, is seen to cover over a more compelling story in which she proves as neurotic as he. So far so good; the approach thoroughly revitalizes one of Lang's little-seen films. But look how Humphries describes the wedding-night act that precipitates the husband's first crisis: "Celia is alone in the bedroom, brushing her hair (one must remember that the exchange about Mark being 'mad' has just taken place). Suddenly, for no apparent reason, she smiles and goes to lock the door." Actually, what has taken place just a few seconds earlier (and after the "mad" conversation) are some words of woman-to-woman advice (or, more to the point, maid-to-mistress advice) implying that sex should be regularly withheld to make men learn women's natural "patience." Thus, with a smile that comes across as sly, Celia gets up and locks the door. It's not unwarranted for Humphries to dissect this act as part of Celia's pattern of extreme fluctuations of attitude that mark her too as neurotic; but it's at least as significant to read her as an American woman squeezed at that moment between cultural codes about sex roles—between an old world, peasant code purveyed by the Mexican maid and an upper-class British one conveyed by Michael Redgrave's style and his character's belief that "no woman can think." To my taste, there's a cloying certainty in Humphries passing along from Freud and Lacan what we "know" about psychological truths, alongside an unwillingness to explore learned and imposed cultural patterns.

In Lang, things are seldom what they seem; investigators are deceived, eyewitnesses untrustworthy, and "vision," as Humphries says, becomes "a matter not just of seeing things as they are but of grasping one's place in the discourse as subject of desire, of the unconscious." But, that project completed, vision in Lang (for spectator as well as character) becomes also a matter of grasping one's place in the discourses of societies—sometimes fascist, sometimes corporate, and sometimes (as in Lang's last two American films) media-dominated. In Humphries's reading, Lang's made-in-the-USA films are "American" only in the sense of employing and subverting Hollywood codes, but Lang's subversion might well extend beyond the text into judgments on patterns of oppression. In modern societies too, "an eye for an eye" remains part of Lang's verdict on "that gaze."

That said, it is not entirely by default that *Fritz Lang: Genre and Representation in His American Films* becomes easily the most thoughtful book on a director badly treated in film studies. It's worthy of attention—and some annoyance—while awaiting that great unwritten book on Lang. —SCOTT SIMMON

THEM OR US
Archetypal Interpretations of Fifties Alien Invasion Films

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Jungian critical approaches to culture seem able to gain wide popular acceptance, as evidenced recently in the TV-induced renewed popularity of the work of Joseph Campbell. This may be in large part due to the tendency of Jungian criticism to advance as much as analyze mythol-

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ogy, and to create fascinating meta-narratives. The method seems more congenial to many than the provocative and (for some) rigid formulas of Jung's intellectual progenitor, Freud. And it is displayed in rather extreme form by Lucanio's book on 1950s alien invasion films, a sub-genre the author separates (in a sometimes questionable way) from the rest of fifties science fiction and horror.

The author, a devout and relentless Jungian, begins by dispensing with Freud (whose work is referred to as "dogma") and opting instead for a concern for what Rollo May termed "man's inherent sense of wonder." While Lucanio doesn't toally dismiss Freudian methodology, he claims it is inappropriate to the alien invasion film, which is not about fear and repression but about "the celebration of human aspiration toward an absolute, higher state of existence,'" a notion he associates with the dubious Jungian "collective unconscious." This idealist concept seems fundamentally unworkable, particularly when Luciano talks about Christ figures in *Fiend Without a Face*, a film with themes so pathological they cry out for a method more incisive than the one offered by *Them or Us*. Although Luciano states that both horror and science fiction respond to psychical rather than sociological concerns, the underpinning for his method (the collective unconscious) is a shaky foundation on which he builds a very teetering structure, and one that has little relationship to any reasonable study of the human mind.

Once we understand the book's method the text becomes extremely predictable, relieved in part by the author's interesting use of his numerous stills and occasional suggestive insights. The Jungian lexicon becomes tiresome very quickly, however, and when we are invited to look at *Earth vs. Flying Saucers* (via, of course, Jung's meditations on UFOs) in terms of mandala symbolism, the situation becomes risible. Some of Lucanio's attempts to establish archetypes are bewildering, as when he discusses Dr. Frankenstein—as played by Peter Cushing in the Hammer film cycle—as a Promethean figure defined by his *hubris* and tendency to overreach in his pursuit of knowledge and attempt to improve human existence. Lucanio argues that Dr. Frankenstein, although a vain and selfish man, is not the "very evil" scientist of the horror film, which causes Lucanio to make a mind-boggling recategorization: the Hammer Frankenstein films should be placed in the alien invasion rather than the horror category. While the Hammer films certainly move Dr. Frankenstein (rather than the monster) to center stage and describe him in terms associated with the protagonist of Romantic fiction, he carries out vicious acts which have little to do with the advancement of science (what about his use of a surrogate at his execution in *Revenge of Frankenstein*?), and he doesn't fill the same mediating role as the scientist of 1950s science fiction. More important, Lucanio fails to attend to the way the Faust myth, with its specific moral connotations, mediated the Promethean image which found its way into Romanticism and the character of Frankenstein.

The deficiency of the book's method is most apparent in its attempt to take on the thankless and eternal task of differentiating horror from science fiction. Lucanio states that the horror film describes "a world unto itself, very much unlike our world," while science fiction is part of the "continuous, historical world." It seems to me *Psycho* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* are as much part of the "historical world" as *Them* or *The Blob*; Lucanio relies solely on Frankenstein, Dracula, Wolfman, and Mummy films (and the Corman adaptation of Poe) for his sense of the horror film, rather than works produced since the sixties. Attention to such films would show that horror can reside outside the supernatural (and in the Freudian) dimension, and more significantly, that recent genre films have obviated such attempts at horror/science fiction differentiation.

This book's most exasperating problem is its evacuation not only of Freud, but of all the attempts of the last thirty years to merge Freud usefully with Marxism, feminism, and various forms of post-structuralist criticism to form new critical models with which to tackle the relationship of art to society. Jungian thinkers simply haven't provided an alternative model, certainly not for a genre so heavily laden with questions both personal and political (the rise of suburbia, McCarthyism, the A-bomb, gender construction in the fifties all have relevance to sci-fi of the period). Luciano's method makes him hostile to variants of psychoanalysis which venture into political terrain, and some of the most important (and now com-

monplace) questions about 1950s science fiction are given the lightest brush in this book. The "sense of wonder" at the heart of *Them or Us* is not new to appreciations of the fantastic cinema, except that it is usually found in fanzines rather than critical literature; the difficulty is that the fanzines have long since recognized that "wonder" doesn't go very far in understanding horror/sci-fi's hold on consciousness.

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THE WOMEN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH
Hitchcock and Feminist Criticism

By Tania Modleski. New York: Methuen, 1988. $27.50 cloth, $10.95 paper.

THE HITCHCOCK ROMANCE
Love and Irony in Hitchcock's films

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These books do much to explain why Hitchcock has long been central to feminist film criticism. Lesley Brill's *The Hitchcock Romance*, by far the lesser of the two, does so by default. Brill shrinks from anything "political" or even contentious, without seeming to see anything contentious about the application of a literary-humane model to Hitchcock's films. What Brill lacks and needs—critical edge—Tania Modleski has in abundance. In future, no one writing about Hitchcock will be able to ignore Modleski's challenges.

Modleski positions her argument against as well as within an established genre of psychoanalytic-feminist interpretation. Her aim is not at all to redeem Hitchcock morally (in the manner of Lesley Brill) or to "rescue Hitchcock for feminism" (in the manner of Robin Wood). It is rather to confront head-on the dilemma encountered by any feminist critic writing about Hitchcock. She is under no illusions: Hitchcock's films enact "rituals of defilement" which evoke fear of women and contain this fear by punishing them. But simply to point to the brutalization of women as a motif of Hitchcock's films is to punish women all over again by reinstating Hitchcock at the pinnacle where *auteur* theory (and his own imperiousness) had lodged him long ago. The problem is that "the strong fascination and identification with femininity revealed in [these same films] *subverts* the claim to mastery and authority not only of [Hitchcock's] male characters but of the director himself." (My emphasis.) The effect is of a kind of double-bind, but one which Modleski sees as one-dimensional. She proposes accordingly to "save female viewers from annihilation at the hands not only of traditional male critics, but of those feminist critics who see women's repression in patriarchal cinema as total, women's liking for these films as nothing but masochism." Both approaches are fatally overdrawn and reductionist. Modleski, who avoids any such reductionism, weaves a sinuous argument through (and beyond) the films she discusses. Since this argument is complex enough to defy paraphrase, I shall use her own words in what follows.

Becauce Hitchcock's films "seek both to destroy and preserve femininity," the question whether he is "sympathetic towards women or misogynistic" is a *question mal posée*. It admits only of reductionist answers. To point out that Hitchcock is *both* and that his "sympathy and misogyny actually entail one another" is by no means a failure of critical nerve on Modleski's part; it serves to indicate how pervasive and how deep Hitchcock's ambivalence towards women finally is.

What then goes into this ambivalence? Films that are told from the woman's point of view (*Blackmail*, *Rebecca*, *Notorious*, *Stage Fright*) should not be rigidly distinguished from some that are not (*Murder!*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*) since these latter either have "women as the ultimate point of identification or . . . place the spectator—regardless of gender—in a classically feminine position." It may seem that the qualification this sentence contains weakens it, since Modleski (whose agenda here would seem to go beyond Hitchcock) regards spectatorship as anything but genderless in principle. There are two reasons why Modleski is not tempted to abandon ambivalence. First, Hitchcock's films permit and encourage a female spectator to feel (and enjoy) a distinctly nonmasochistic and nonvoyeuristic anger. "Male critics frequently point to *Psycho* as a film which punished audiences ["regardless of gender"] for their illicit voyeuristic desires, but they ignore the fact that within the film not only are women the objects of the male gaze, they are also recipients of most of the punishment." Again, Hitchcock is

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"obsessed with exploring the psyches of tormented and victimized women. While most critics attribute this interest to a sadistic delight in seeing his leading ladies suffer," the point remains that "the obsession often takes the form of a particularly lucid expose of the predicaments and contradictions of women's existence." This means that the female spectator need neither be the "misogynist, identifying with the passive female character," nor the "transvestite," identifying with the male hero. "The source of so much desire and so much dread in so many Hitchcock films" is the possibility of identifying with the female outlaw, since Hitchcock frequently associated men with the impersonal power of the law as a way of keeping femininity at a safe psychic distance.

The second reason Modleski sticks to her notion of ambivalence follows from the first. If "woman's response is complex and contradictory," it does not admit of a reductionist characterization and "requires an understanding of woman's placement on the margins of patriarchal culture—at once inside and outside its modes and structures," then we must pay attention—as many reductionists do not—to the female spectator's uneasy counterpart, the male. The world of false appearances, a familiar Hitchcock menace, "is so dreadful to men . . . because it is a feminine and feminizing space."

This turning of the tables applies first of all to Hitchcock himself. It was in *Rebecca* that Hitchcock found one of his proper subjects—"the potential terror and loss of self involved *in* identification, especially identification with a woman." This makes Hitchcock's own denial of authorship ("it's not a Hitchcock picture") all the more significant. Since the feminine subverts identity, even (or especially) from beyond the grave, the male spectator is as much deconstructed as constructed by Hitchcock's films, which reveal a "fascination with femininity that throws masculine identity into question and crisis."

At this point, Modleski tellingly insinuates into her argument Hitchcock's frequent "images of ambiguous sexuality that threaten to destabilize the gender identification" of (male) protagonist and viewer alike. *Murder!*, for instance, which Modleski analyzes brilliantly, suggests "that sexual difference is, ultimately, a matter of not simply denying the male's 'similitude' to the female, but his risking feminization . . . in order to achieve mastery and control." Not that the male always succeeds. *Vertigo* works to elicit in the audience the same kind of identification with Madeleine that lies behind Scotty's attraction to her—so that we are identifying with Scotty, who is identifying with Madeleine, who is identifying with Carlotta Valdez or Mrs. Elster or Judy. (Lesley Brill notes that *Vertigo* contains an unusually large number of dissolves. Modleski explains *why*.) Not only does woman in this way become "the ultimate point of identification" for the spectator; Hitchcock also, and famously, goes out of his way to make the spectator privy to Judy/Madeleine's thoughts.

Vertigo, like *Rebecca*, indicates "the complex and contradictory nature of male desire" and its "impossible dialectics." By also suggesting that "masculine identity is bound up with feminine identity," it helps us "problematize male spectatorship and masculine identity" in general. (This, I take it, is Modleski's broader agenda.) In scenes like the one at the costume ball in *Rebecca*, it is the male spectator who becomes the "transvestite." Here Modleski executes a skillful turn on (or turning inside-out of) the oedipal. "Women's bisexual nature," she points out, "is less a problem for women than for patriarchy." Since men's fascination and identification with the feminine undermines their efforts to achieve masculine strength and autonomy, it is "a primary cause of the violence towards women that abounds in Hitchcock's films."

Notorious, Modleski wryly observes, "does not sound like a promising narrative from a feminist point of view." ("After setting the woman up as an object of male desire and curiosity, the film proceeds to submit her to a process of purification whereby she is purged of her excess sexuality in order to be rendered fit for her place in the patriarchal order.") Yet even here, we are encouraged "to condemn Devlin in his role as withdrawn, judgmental spectator," and are drawn into "an intimate identification with the vulnerable and increasingly helpless heroine," whose "tribulations force Devlin to acknowledge his vulnerability and his error." In general, the male in repressing feminizing aspects of himself projects these onto the woman who then (to purloin and alter a damaging line of Ingrid Bergman's, from

Casablanca) has to do the suffering for both of them. Men are both fascinated and threatened by (their own or women's) bisexuality, and "it is woman who pays for this ambivalence—often with her life." Men's fears become women's fate.

But one would never think so from Lesley Brill's relentlessly subfeminist account, *The Hitchcock Romance*, which centers on "the redemptive possibilities of love between men and women," imported into Hitchcock's films as a rule to which the myriad examples of something else are exceptions. While Modleski's argument reaches beyond itself (to the question of spectatorship at large) Brill's has no difficulty defeating itself. Brill observes in passing that "the equivocal status of many women and their intermittent (*sic*) brutalization by men . . . damps somewhat the glow of the comedy," which may stand as the understatement of the year. More generally, Brill admits that his "limited concern with recent feminist attacks on Hitchcock may strike some readers as eccentric." (It struck *this* reader as downright perverse.) That Brill's lukewarm interest "in politically oriented criticism . . . is a matter of taste, not dogma" is scarcely disarming. One does not obliterate politics by hiding behind elaborate plot summaries, vague generalization, clichés (how Yeat's "widening gyre" got across an editor's desk into Brill's section on *Vertigo* will forever defeat me), and watered-down ideas derived from William Rothman, Stanley Cavell, and Northrop Frye. The Hitchcock who emerges from this miasma is a Hitchcock with his claws pulled, as he might be bowdlerized for Alan Bloom's humanities canon, and not—heaven forfend—destined for Joe Bob's Drive-In. Brill is small beer alongside Modleski. One frequently wonders whether they are discussing the same director. Brill, following Frye, contrasts "romance" with "irony," yet remains impervious to Hitchcock's own ironies. One example, from *Frenzy*, must suffice. Brill, who thinks that Hitchcock's "deepest dreams were composed of nothing more remarkable than love and marriage, happy families, and a forgiving universe that allows such things," sees the blatantly dyspeptic dinner scenes between Inspector Oxford and his wife as nothing but exemplars of the same. That Oxford is capable, however, fleetingly, of wishing his wife dead—a point no more lost on Modleski than on Hitchcock himself—never even crosses Brill's mind. It is Norman/Mrs. Bates, let us remember, who wouldn't hurt a fly.

—PAUL THOMAS

CULT MOVIES 3

By Danny Peary. New York: Fireside/Simon and Schuster, 1988. $12.95.

This third volume in Peary's on-going survey of cult films has all the virtues and drawbacks of his previous two. His books are a joy to read, full of sharp insights from a true *cinéaste* with more than a little *chutzpah* (who else would spend time proving that the chase scene in *The Road Warrior* was derived from the Alamo sequence of *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier*?). The difficulty is Peary's less-than-adequate definition of the cult movie, although it may be a moot point at this stage; as "cult" becomes an increasingly popular category in video rental stores, this slippery sub-genre continues to be a topic of critical writing at least as vaguely formulated as Peary's books. Originally it seemed that "cult" was associated with camp or such notions as "It's so bad it's good." This is born out by Peary's selection of films such as *Glen or Glenda* and *Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!*, but undermined by the inclusion of films which are more or less part of the mainstream canon, such as *Psycho* and *Dr. Strangelove*.

Peary's justification for his sense of the cult film seems based on a form of reader-response criticism. He argues that certain films gain cult status as audience perception changes and particular audience phenomena occur, such as a film's gradually achieving a devoted following or new critical celebrity with changing social circumstances. This sounds fine on the face of it: *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, viewed simply as grade-C science fiction in the 1950s, today seems primarily a peculiar reflection of fifties naivete and bad taste, and has benefitted commercially from its presentation as *kitsch*. Yet this approach doesn't work, since other films Peary lists have always enjoyed large followings and for reasons which have been consistent and not especially quirky (*Los Olvidados* is great Buñuel; *Ride the High Country* is a superior Western). Some of the films selected seem to be works Peary *hopes* will achieve cult status, such as Brando's beautiful and idiosyncratic Western

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FICTION, FILM, AND FAULKNER
The Art of Adaptation

By Gene D. Phillips. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988. $24.95 cloth.

Fiction, Film, and Faulkner is a scrupulously researched account of Falkner's career as a screenwriter and of the movies and teleplays adapted from his novels and stories. To some extent it is an update of my 1977 book *Faulkner and Film*—so up-to-the-minute that it includes information on a project that is still in development (*As I Lay Dying*) and a critique of the 1985 teleplay *The Long Hot Summer*—but as Phillips points out, the emphasis is reversed: he has concentrated most of his attention on the filmed fictions whereas I had been more concerned with Faulkner's screenplays and their relationship to his fiction.

A great deal has been discovered about Faulkner since 1977, and there are many more key texts available. Joseph Blotner has revised his biography; Noel Polk has corrected the texts of many of the major novels; one Fox script, *The Road to Glory*, has been published, as have all of the MGM screenplays and treatments and several of the Warner Bros. scripts now in the Brodsky Collection (such as *Battle Cry, The De Gaulle Story*, and the treatment *Country Lawyer*); and Horton Foote's teleplay and screenplay for *Tomorrow* have been published as well. Phillips has made good use of all of this and more, and he takes the time to set the scholarly record straight as he moves through the (critical) literature and the Literature and the films.

After reprinting producer Jerry Wald's explanation of how great books should be adapted for the movies—a Foreword, reeking of cigar smoke, that gives the devil his due—Phillips devotes 50 pages to a run-through of Faulkner's career as a screenwriter. He confines his discussion to those scripts that were filmed or have been published. This is a perfectly reasonable limitation of the field of inquiry, but in the absence of a comprehensive filmography it also limits the book's usefulness. I could find no reference to *Banjo on My Knee*, which was produced, nor to *Revolt in the Earth*, which was not—and found *Country Lawyer* only in the bibliography. If Phillips had at least mentioned the works he does not discuss at length, or listed them all at the end, and if he had cleaned up minor errors of omission (for example, there's no mention of the novel on which *The Southerner* was based, on p. 136 he leaves *Tomorrow* off the list of black-and-white adaptations, and in the filmography he notes some films as CinemaScope but forgets *Sanctuary*), this book would have a much better shot at being what Bernard Dick's blurb, on the jacket and in the ads, proclaims it: "Certainly . . . the most complete study of Faulkner on film that has been done." But the blurb is not the fault of Phillips, who discusses—and documents—not all the work but what he considers the major work. What this first section is, and what it set out to be, is a well-paced, efficient, scholarly, readable, damn good introduction to Faulkner the screenwriter.

Except for an epilogue that deals briefly with two Faulkner documentaries, the rest of the book examines all of the films and most of the teleplays that have been based directly on Faulkner's stories and novels. His conclusion, which I share, is that *Intruder in the Dust* and *Tomorrow* are the best of the movies and that *Barn Burning* is the best teleplay. His narrative critical method is to interweave biographical information, especially concerning the genesis of each novel, into summaries and readings of the novels and their progeny. The chapter on *Sanctuary*, for example, gives a succinct account of Faulkner's early life and first novels; summarizes and critiques both the galley and published versions of *Sanctuary* (in itself an example of Phillips's diligent and rewarding use of recently published Faulkner manuscripts); takes a look at *The Story of Temple Drake;* discusses *Requiem for a Nun* as a novel and then, in Ruth Ford's version, as a play; and then tackles Tony Richardson's *Sanctuary* as an adaptation of

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To some extent the entire adaptation section shares this problem. After all the comparing of stories and all the fascinating details, one wants to know *why*—for example, why study these films? What is it about *them* that makes them worth all this attention? Is it enough that they are false or faithful to a great source? Part of the problem, I would say, is that a picture as bad as *The Sound and the Fury* has no interest beyond the curiosity of its having been based on a great novel, and that as watchable as *The Reivers* is, nobody is going to be watching it in a Film History class. Even so, I left the book feeling that the adaptations had not been discussed, beyond the ubiquitous matters of story and theme, as deeply as they might have been and, specifically, as *movies*: that at crucial points, the cinematic analyses had run out of gas. Nor is there much of a theory of adaptation advanced here, although the nature of faithfulness is addressed at length; we read only about what has been done, and the reasonable reasons for its having been done that way, rather than about what might have been done—that is to say, what the artistic example of Faulkner, or the very possibilities of a braver art of adaptation, might have demanded. The argument as a whole, however, does reach a conclusion: that the Christian theme of redemptive suffering, which Phillips convincingly demonstrates was of central importance to Faulkner, is implicit in many of the filmed adaptations; particularly in this, but also in other respects, Phillips finds most of the adaptations "fundamentally faithful" to their originals.

It still seems to me that to approach Faulkner by way of a censored and sentimentalized adaptation is like trying to learn something about Philip K. Dick by watching *Blade Runner*. I'd prefer that classes and theorists take on the great adaptations, like *Greed* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* and *Henry V*. But if one is going to study picutures like *The Long Hot Summer* and *The Sound and the Fury* at all—or the far more likely candidate for serious attention, *Intruder in the Dust*—and certainly if one wants a well-researched and carefully organized introduction to what Faulkner wrote for the movies and what the movies have made of his writings, this is the book to take along.

—BRUCE KAWIN

Banerjee, Shampa, and Anil Srivastava. *One Hundred Indian Feature Films: An Annotated Filmography*. New York: Garland, 1988. $36.00. The aim here is to provide plot summaries of a hundred representative films from the advent of sound to the present, with some accompanying critical comments or biographical information about the film-makers. Films by the directors known abroad are included, but the majority of titles will be new to Western readers. A handy resource as Indian films trickle in on videotape. —E.C.

Barnard, Tim, ed. *Argentine Cinema*. Nightwood Editions, Box 5432, Station A, Toronto, Ont. M5W 1N6, 1987. $10.95 plus 10% shipping in Canada, 15% elsewhere.

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Derry, Charles. *The Suspense Thriller: Films in the Shadow of Alfred Hitchcock*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988. $35.00. Derry has the candor to note that he writes about suspense films because he likes them and finds them personally enriching; but they also further a genre project and give him the chance to fomulate some ideas about how suspense, that old standby of the scriptwriting guidebooks, actually works. The bulk of the book comprises summaries and explications of films the author places in sub-categories such as the political thriller, the thriller of acquired identity, the thriller of moral confrontation, etc. —E.C.

Doherty, Thomas. *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Winchester, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1988. $39.95 cloth, $14.95 paper. It was in the fifties, Doherty argues, that Old Hollywood died: that innocent, golden era when everybody went to the movies, the Code ruled, and nobody had ever heard of rock 'n' roll. From then on it has been TV, audience demographics with a teenage tilt, mayhem in increasing doses, and industry panic. Doherty is a deft writer, and his thoroughly researched study makes excellent reading as cultural history, with some intriguing findings. Teenpics, for

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instance, while relatively gory, played no part in the decade's major censorship battles. They were also, which may not be generally recognized, a key factor in the industry's new fascination—based upon cold-eyed economics—with title songs. Ironies abound: later teenpix have turned away from rebellion and yearn for more parental control and authority; and even "adult," R-rated films are in reality largely aimed at teenage viewers. Nonetheless, Doherty believes, despite the aging of the baby-boomers and a relative scarcity of new teenagers, "adolescents will remain the dominant audience, teenpics the most visible film form." But it still won't be easy for filmmakers to guess what teenagers want. —E.C.

Kael, Pauline. *Hooked*. New York: Dutton, 1989. $24.95. She never changes and she never gives up on movies; this is the inimitable Kaelian mixture as before, covering from late 1985 to mid-1988. When she still lived in Berkeley and was not yet famous, I once accused her of what I took to be critical heresy: writing as if the review were more important than the work. "*Of course*," she snapped, "it often is!" The intervening years—about 30 of them—have installed her in the tiny, elect category of writers for whom that's sometimes perfectly true. She may not have the range of a Bernard Shaw, whose theater (and for that matter music and painting) criticism remains highly readable today—though the plays he reviewed have vanished more totally than any videotape sunbaked into dust; she's always had some instinctive aversion to Ideas. But a lot of her stuff will last. —E.C.

Ketcham, Charles. *The Influence of Existentialism on Ingmar Bergman: An Analysis of the Theological Ideas Shaping a Filmmaker's Art*. (Studies in Art and Religious Interpretation, Vol. 5) Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986. $59.95 (list price); $39.95 (series price/volume).

Klobas, Lauri E. *Disability Drama in Television and Film*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988. $39.95. Critical annotations from disabled persons' point of view.

Kolker, Robert Philip. *A Cinema of Loneliness* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. $45.00 cloth, $16.95 paper. The "brief modernist movement in American cinema" that was the topic of Kolker's first version of this book (work by Penn, Kubrick, Scorsese, Coppola, and Altman) is over, he now concludes; and to study how great the fall he has incorporated a chapter on Spielberg to replace that on Coppola, serving to examine how cinema in the eighties became "such a clear and brilliant mirror of the dominant ideology." Nonetheless, he is not despairing; "Moribund," he concludes in his new preface, "is not exactly the same as dead." In actuality Kolker's new "Spielberg" chapter deals at length with many non-Spielberg films (the Rambo and Rocky cycles, particularly) and with the curious irrealism of Ronald Reagan before getting to Spielberg himself. The typical Spielberg techniques of ideological positioning of the viewer get high marks for subtlety and insidiousness: the precise manipulation of Hitchcock without the extra layers and ambiguities. Kolker is good at analyzing the machine-tooled shooting and cutting of Spielberg films, as well as their calculated structures of fear and desire. He also provides an ingenious explication of *E.T.* as a Lacanian work, and of the way in which the movie *The Color Purple* turned Alice Walker's novel into an "authoritarian narrative that confirms the necessity of male-dominated structures of power."
—E.C.

Maio, Kathi. *Feminist in the Dark*. Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1988. $7.95. A collection of reviews mostly from the journal *Sojourners*, these are informal but penetrating essays on popular films of recent years which raise feminist issues. Maio is resolutely non-theoretical—"I have never knowingly used a term like *mise en scène* (although from time to time I have broken down and used the word genre)"—but her reviews rise above newspaper level and she has a sharp but not snide sense of humor; she's a fan with independent tastes. —E.C.

Russett, Robert, and Cecile Starr. *Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art*, rev. ed. New York: Da Capo Press, 1988, 1976. $14.95 paper. This reissue of a 1976 book includes new information on both some early animators and recent work. The focus is still on North American film-makers for the most part; detailed treatments are given of several dozen artists, including Mary Ellen Bute, Norman McLaren, Robert Breer, Harry Smith, Tony Conrad, Paul Sharits, the Whitney brothers, Stan VanDerBeek, and Ed Emschwiller. Considerable use is made of statements by the film-makers. —E.C.

Schuchman, John S. *Hollywood Speaks: Deafness and the Film Entertainment Industry*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1988. $24.95. The deaf are not a tiny minority; we have something like 15 million hearing-impaired people in the US alone. This enabled them, by political pressure on the networks and FCC, to obtain the closed-caption system whereby a special receiver can display printed captions. But movies generally have followed the oppressive pattern common to their treatment of other minorities—even in ostensibly "sympathetic" stories. Schuchman provides a deaf-person's critical view of the media, plus an arresting discussion of the use of American Sign Language. ASL, like Native American languages, has been suppressed by educators, and ought to be of special interest to film theorists because it is not a visual translation of English but an actual nonverbal language in its own right.—E.C.

Stone, Jennifer. *Mind Over Media*. Cayuse Press, P.O. Box 9086, Berkeley, CA 94709, 1988. $9.95 paper. A Berkeley critic who sometimes—like Pauline Kael long before her—talks about film on KPFA, Stone has a scrappy, autobiographical way of doing criticism and a fitful kind of wit. ("As we all know, sex is like sandwiches, there has to be something in between." Cute, you think first, before you realize it doesn't quite work.) But what we get here is basically a confessional modern mind confronting the works of media, without any pretense of impersonality or high critical method, and hoping for oc-

casional redemption: "The art that knocks us out is the art which changes the world." Stone thinks it still happens, and establishes her independence by defending Resnais's under-appreciated *Mon Oncle d'Amérique*. —E.C.

Valicha, Kishore. *The Moving Image: A Study of Indian Cinema*. Orient Longman Ltd., R. Kamai Marg, Ballard Estate, Bombay 400 038, India, 1988. Rs. 150. The Indian cinema is the world's largest and very likely, in its psychosocial role among its people, the most powerful. This short book provides an introduction to the psychological themes and styles of Indian films which is easily readable by Western readers (it even has a glossary of common Hindi terms needed to follow the stories). Valicha's introductory section shows his familiarity with recent Western theory, but the main virtue of the book is his ability to interpret the major forms of Indian film in their relationships with Hollywood genres. But Indian film like Indian life, he argues, displays a kind of established chaos—in which rustic comedy and mythology pop in and out among the melodramatic and romantic constituents of the work; Indian cinema, we might suspect, has been postmodern without ever bothering to be modern. Now that Indian films are becoming widely available on videotape through Indian grocery and handicraft outlets, some of the films Valicha discusses can be seen here. —E.C.

History

PIONEERS OF THE BRITISH FILM Vol. 3

By John Barnes. Bishopsgate Press, 37 Union Street, London SE1 1SE, 1988. £20.

Barnes's book is the third in a projected series of five historical volumes, scheduled to conclude at 1901. *Pioneers* covers 1898, when story or "made-up" productions won increasing attention from film-makers like Robert W. Paul who had decided that French farce and subjects like trains and buses were rapidly losing favor with British audiences.

Cecil Hepworth makes his appearance in 1898, and W. K. L. Dickson shows up to document the return of the Guards from the Sudan for American Biograph, who managed a 10:30 p.m. screening at the Palace Theater from footage shot eight hours earlier. Dickson also recorded Queen Victoria, and Pope Leo XIII in the Vatican. Filming with the 70mm Mutograph, Dickson was said to keep a low profile so as to avoid speculative linkage between his equipment and Edison's.

Birt Acres announced the Birtac, the world's first substandard-gauge camera and projector: 17.5mm wide, single perf. Charles urban responded with a combined substandard camera, printer, projector, and snapshot: the Biokam. Urban's Warwick Trading Company itself started in 1898, metamorphosed from Maguire and Baucus as Urban shifted his offerings from Edison products to include the Bioscope, Lumière's Cinématographe, and films from Méliès, Paul, G. A. Smith and others.

It wasn't a great year for innovation. Smith's trick films approximated those of Méliès across the Channel. (Smith had bought a copy of Méliès's *The Haunted Castle* in 1896). The most interesting is *Santa Claus*, wherein two children sleep screen left while a circular inset, screen right, shows the old gentleman entering a chimney. What might otherwise have passed as a vision scene takes a different turn when the inset fades out and Santa emerges from the room's fireplace to leave his gifts. The consequence is a spatially separated parallel action, albeit contained in what reads as a single, "continuous" shot.

The other "made up" that merits special attention is R. W. Paul's *Exhibition* or *Come Along Do!*, likely based on an 1878 stereograph card also titled *Come Along Do!* In both cases a man is preoccupied with a nude female statue until a woman pulls him away, but in Paul's film, this scene is preceded by the couple's sharing a picnic basket outside the exhibit; they follow passersby inside. Thus two scenes chronologically link one narrative. Sadoul finds precedent in *Lever d'Yvette* (Pathé) and *Lever de la Pierreuse* by Lumière and Lear (both 1897), but he also cites *Our New General Servant* by Paul, which appears actually to have been a series of four films, sometimes linked by subtitles (that in itself might constitute another first appearance).

Barnes's work is thoroughly illustrated with frame enlargements, advertisements, and period photographs. One with particular appeal, appearing on the cover as well, shows Paul's first film studio in New Southgate, London. Camera and cameraman are mounted atop a platform travelling on rails. In a reminiscence, Paul says that "Sometimes the trolley was run to or from the stage while the picture was being taken, thus giving a gradual enlarge-

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ment or reduction of the image on the film." (10) His description sounds very like a technique out of the nineteenth-century phantasmagoria.

The author spends no time on the state of live narrations accompanying film exhibition or on coloring (G. J. Mellor quotes an 1898 advertisement for a "full colour" exhibition in his *Picture Pioneers*). Likely, such material will appear in subsequent volumes. A substantial chapter considers film equipment. An appendix lists 1898 films with descriptions and references as appropriate. *Pioneers of the British Film* lacks ideological, economic, and political readings. Just the facts. It's the kind of history on which others draw and which is disposed to outlive its offspring. —JOHN FELL

THE CENSORSHIP PAPERS
Movie Censorship Letters from the Hays Office 1934-1968

By Gerald Gardner. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1987. $18.95.

Although this book is a useful record of precisely how the Hays Office ordered the censorship of Hollywood films (and set the standard for film butchery internationally), film historians may complain that it provides an insufficient sense of the ideology and dynamics of the Production Code Administration. Gerald Gardner no doubt feels that the politics and contradictions of the Hays Code have been adequately accounted for elsewhere, and he devotes these pages to a compendium of letters from the Hays Office to Hollywood producers regarding concrete ways to make films (Gardner provides 67 case studies from all genres) acceptable to the Code. This is not to say that the book provides no sense of the Code's origins; on the contrary, Gardner is able to give the reader a good sense of the political and economic climate that produced the Hayes Office without going over well-trod ground. He capsulizes the Code's beginnings and its sensibility very neatly in his introduction, and the story Gardner tells has not lost impact despite its familiarity.

The Hayes Office came chiefly out of a deep puritanical strain in the American temperament, but more particularly out of a need to find a variety of scapegoats onto whom could be displaced panic and anxiety after the 1929 stock-market crash. Gardner asserts that the movie audience itself, although entranced by the medium, was deeply suspicious and resentful of the images Hollywood offered, simultaneously loving and loathing Hollywood Babylon and visions of freedom (sexual and otherwise) out of the reach of Middle America. Most middle-class notions of Hollywood excess were wildly exaggerated, of course (as demonstrated by resentful letters in fan magazines criticizing movie-star behavior), but this repressive attitude, particularly in the wake of the Fatty Arbuckle and similar scandals, produced an atmosphere that would penalize the artworks if not the artists themselves. Gardner agrees with the commonplace that the Hays Office was an alternative to federal legislation, since Congress was about to get into the censorship act. Will Hays, a hack for the extraordinarily corrupt Harding administration, was placed in charge of an oversight office whose principles were formulated primarily by the Catholic Church which, as Gardner establishes quite clearly, was the major force in film censorship (both through Hays and its own Legion of Decency) through most of the century. Gardner suggests that the Hollywood moguls (Mayer, Warner, et al.) were quickly taken aback by the restrictions the Code placed on the work their studios produced, the same Code they acquiesced to as a means of warding off congressional action. In hindsight it is hard to believe that these men were ever particularly interested in defending their artists, or in challenging the niggling, banal, pious attitudes that Hollywood, in its business-oriented, pragmatic conservatism, always nurtured. Rather than a deal with the devil, cooperation with the Hays Office gave producers a way to get on with the show, and for 30 years the Code went largely unchallenged by the Hollywood production hierarchy.

The letters making up the bulk of the book provide proof not so much of the narrow-mindedness and bigotry of the Code (these are manifest) as of the basic folly of censorship itself and how censorship, aside from destroying all notions of artistic expression, usually creates worse evils than those is tries to correct. A remarkable example is the cutting of a famous scene in James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1913), which Gardner alludes to briefly in his discussion of the Hays Office reaction to the horror

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film. The scene depicts the Frankenstein monster (Boris Karloff) spotting a little girl playing by a lake. The little girl is not frightened by the monster, and immediately invites him to take part in her game of floating flowers on the water. She hands the monster some flowers which he quickly scatters, and, after looking with childish frustration at his empty hands, reaches out for something more to throw. In James Whale's original cut (recently restored on videocassette) we see the monster pick up the little girl and throw her into the lake; when she sinks beneath the surface, the monster panics and runs away. The scene clearly shows the monster to be as innocent as a child, making all the more horrendous his subsequent persecution. In the censored version, there is a cut just as the monster reaches for the girl, allowing the viewer to conjure up vicious images of child abuse and murder. Incidents such as this are not by any means uncommon in the Hays Office's history of purifying the American cinema. Some moments are vaguely amusing, as when Code officials suggested that *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* might improve its depiction of Latinos, as if Hays or Hollywood ever cared a whit about racial stereotyping or racial justice.

The Motion Picture Production Code is reprinted in full in one of the book's appendices, and we still have to marvel at the things deemed unfit for human eyes and ears during one of the most genocidal centuries in history. While the Code touches on various matters (depictions of crime, violence, drugs, religion), sex stands out, of course, as the Code's foremost obsession and taboo. The Hays Office's proscriptions on sexuality are very familiar, since they derive from structures of repression basic to American society, recurrently even (especially?) when sectors of the population show a more open and reasonable attitude regarding sexual conduct. The monitoring and mutilation of the American cinema by the Hays Office was not a conspiratorial phenomenon; it occurred because of impulses of the society itself, and the demise of the Code has done little, it would appear, to cause us to reevaluate the premise and contradictions of censorship. The documentation in Gardner's book makes us reflect not only on the Hays legacy but on the very assumptions which continue to legitimize the "rating" of art.

—CHRISTOPHER SHARRETT

TELEVISION AND THE RED MENACE
The Video Road to Vietnam

By J. Fred MacDonald. New York: Praeger, 1985. $29.95.

This is an odd book: provocative yet unexceptional, exhilarating and boring, detailed but also partial, pessimistic, and pollyannaish.

Its provocative yet, on reflection, unexceptional thesis is that American television paved the way for the country's involvement in Vietnam. Television did so by bombarding the American public with a steady dose "of propagandized, persuasive programming" (p. vii). Some of it came from presidents, members of their administrations, legislators, public officials of all sorts; but much originated directly from television programmers themselves. It consisted of anti-communism, both domestic and foreign, Cold War rhetoric, justifications of and support for US intervention abroad. Communism and communists were depicted as merciless, perfidious, evil, and expansionist. The US, its representatives, their policies and actions, were generally portrayed as morally right and, especially in fictional shows, successful.

The propaganda came in every conceivable form, under two general rubrics. There was news coverage of domestic and world affairs, plus a slew of public affairs, interview, and newsmaker programs, as well as documentaries. There were also the "entertainment" shows: anti-communist spies, private citizens as secret agents, military comedies, children's cartoons, religious programs, dramas, and westerns.

For someone who has reached fifty, this recitation is exhilarating, like having your life flash before you. But boring, too, as you drown in a flood of past history and pop culture. Blacklisting, the Korean and Cold Wars, Senator Joseph McCarthy, Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson, Secretary of State Dulles, containment, brinkmanship, limited war, massive retaliation, liberation of captive peoples, Tonkin Gulf and its congressional resolution, all make appearances. As do "I Led Three Lives," "Victory at Sea," "The Phil Silvers Show," "Gomer Pyle, USMC," "Get Smart," "Mission Impossible," "Captain Midnight," "Captain Video," "The Lone Ranger," "The

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It's all here, and more, culled by MacDonald from assorted primary and secondary sources, especially *Variety*. Providing many of the summaries, excerpts, and snippets of programs, is his personal audiovisual collection and "archive of vintage films, kinescopes, and sound recordings."

That's a strength and weakness of the book. It deals in detail with actual programs. But how partial, how representative is the material cited? In my reading (and memory), moreover, the many programs he mentions were more diverse in themes and perspectives, and some of them, at least, were more complex, than MacDonald allows. And was there really such a dearth of countervailing or alternative or even dissenting views?

More problematic, MacDonald assumes that the programs made the American people, who he thinks were (and are) otherwise isolationist by inclination, willing to tolerate, if not endorse, American military involvement in Vietnam: it "made protracted, undeclared war acceptable." (p. 212) But there are other explanations: the incremental nature of the involvement, consensus among the political elite about the appropriateness of intervention (the Republicans wanted more force applied, not less), the extraordinary amount of punishment absorbed by the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, the time needed for effective public opposition to be mobilized in the US and so on.

In this respect, polling evidence indicated that by the mid-1960s a majority of Americans just wanted the war to be over either through an American victory or withdrawal. What they did not want was for the war to drag on. This suggests the possibility that television, or at least some of its content, contained the seeds of popular disillusion with and eventual opposition to a protracted conflict. In other words, the Vietnam war may have been incompatible with the television model: on television the good guy wins in half an hour, or an hour; it rarely takes much longer.

If the book has a hero, it is Edward R. Murrow. In "See It Now," he and Fred Friendly took on tyrants and demagogues and battled (not always successfully, nor without opposition from CBS) for truth and decency. In a pollyanaish "Epilogue" MacDonald sees a "new professionalism emerging among network news personnel." (p. 243) It includes "a balance of opinion and a willingness to investigate without bias." (p. 248) Perhaps so; but I do not see any Murrows on television today.

—DAVID L. PALETZ

FRAMEWORK
A History of Screenwriting in the American Film

By Tom Stempel, New York: Continuum, 1989.

Although you can't judge a book by its cover, Tom Stempel's history of American screenwriting strikes a shallow note, to begin with, in its packaging. The photographs selected for the coverflap are of big names—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Woody Allen, John Huston and Orson Welles—none of them your typical Hollywood scribe. The title makes for a catchy if meaningless play on words, while the subtitle seems to promise the gravity and substance of a thorough exegesis.

The subject is ripe. Though Nancy Lynn Schwartz's *The Hollywood Writers' Wars*, which begins in the early 1930s and chronicles the formation of the Screen Writers Guild, is an indispensable forerunner—and for sheer fun I would also recommend Tom Dardis's *Some Time in the Sun*, Fred Lawrence Guiles's *Hanging On in Paradise*, and Sheila Graham's *The Garden of Allah*, all primarily about the Hollywood screenwriting community of the 1930s and 1940s—it is an embarrassing fact that a good general overview of United States scriptwriters and scriptwriting does not exist.

Into this breach has ventured Stempel, a Los Angeles City College professor, whose other books (notably, an appreciation of screenwriter Nunnally Johnson) and articles have contributed to an understanding of the relative importance of scriptwriters in the film-making maelstrom.

Yet this is no genuine history. It is a hodgepodge of "mini-essays" and critical doodles, chronologically organized but otherwise lacking narrative sweep or coherence. There is little original research—whereas the tremendous value of Nancy Lynn Schwartz's history, for example, lay not only in the drama of her continuity, and in the keen perspective, but in the

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A History of Screenwriting in the American Film

By Tom Stempel, New York: Continuum, 1989.

Although you can't judge a book by its cover, Tom Stempel's history of American screenwriting strikes a shallow note, to begin with, in its packaging. The photographs selected for the coverflap are of big names—F. Scott Fitzgerald, Woody Allen, John Huston and Orson Welles—none of them your typical Hollywood scribe. The title makes for a catchy if meaningless play on words, while the subtitle seems to promise the gravity and substance of a thorough exegesis.

The subject is ripe. Though Nancy Lynn Schwartz's *The Hollywood Writers' Wars*, which begins in the early 1930s and chronicles the formation of the Screen Writers Guild, is an indispensable forerunner—and for sheer fun I would also recommend Tom Dardis's *Some Time in the Sun*, Fred Lawrence Guiles's *Hanging On in Paradise*, and Sheila Graham's *The Garden of Allah*, all primarily about the Hollywood screenwriting community of the 1930s and 1940s—it is an embarrassing fact that a good general overview of United States scriptwriters and scriptwriting does not exist.

Into this breach has ventured Stempel, a Los Angeles City College professor, whose other books (notably, an appreciation of screenwriter Nunnally Johnson) and articles have contributed to an understanding of the relative importance of scriptwriters in the film-making maelstrom.

Yet this is no genuine history. It is a hodgepodge of "mini-essays" and critical doodles, chronologically organized but otherwise lacking narrative sweep or coherence. There is little original research—whereas the tremendous value of Nancy Lynn Schwartz's history, for example, lay not only in the drama of her continuity, and in the keen perspective, but in the

prodigious spadework, the sheer number of interviews and sources she tapped in the course of her assignment. Stempel's book is amply footnoted—but with too much rehash. There is some useful information, but too little color and excitement in the dry, skipping-around approach.

Stempel launches his chronicle with the silent era—the most remote, the most challenging, and the most intriguing portion of the book. Unfortunately, the silent writers are short-shrifted in a section of roughly 50 pages which is highly dependent on the memoirs of William de Mille, Richard Schickel's biography of D. W. Griffith, and the autobiographies of the top silent clowns. The relatively unheralded contributions of Roy McCardell, Gene Gauntier, C. Gardner Sullivan, and Frank Woods are spotlighted, but because Stempel believes a book should be "liftable" (i.e., not too weighty), their biographical sketches are limited and not particularly illuminating.

Stempel speeds past the thirties—and the bloom of talkies, with its shock effect on scripts and writers. Taking little note of new writing styles and trends, of development and metamorphosis in the field, instead he wields a studio-by-studio comparison, focusing more on producers, and tending to aggrandize those who had been writers or could talk to writers or who could appreciate writers. At MGM Irving Thalberg and Arthur Freed receive high marks, as does William LeBaron at Paramount, Hal Wallis at Warners, Harry Cohn at Columbia (if writers could survive his nastiness), and Darryl F. Zanuck at Fox. Their faults are glossed over.

When Stempel does get around to discussing writers, it is usually the more famous and familiar writers whom he treats in his "mini-essays." Richard Corliss took this anthological tack first and foremost in his two books on the subject (as editor)—*The Hollywood Screenwriters* and *Talking Pictures: Screenwriters in the American Cinema*. And Stempel does not have much to add to the orthodox point of view about most of these people.

Herman J. Mankiewicz (Stempel writes) was a sort of genius who, among other things, was vastly superior to that overly talky, egocentric younger brother of his, Joseph L. Mankiewicz (poor Joe Mankiewicz—his long, illustrious career being forever compared unfavorably with his brother's brief, sputtering one). Casey Robinson was "the best of all the Warners writers" (hey, what about John Huston, Howard Koch, the Epstein brothers, etc.?). As Stempel views it, when Dudley Nichols became less self-important and loosened up with comedies like *Heller in Pink Tights*, he improved as a writer (actually, at the time of *Heller*, Nichols was pretty busy dying of cancer; Walter Bernstein wrote most of the funny stuff, ahead of the day's filming). And Ben Hecht gets the customary reverential nod (never mind that many of his credits were supplied by a stable of ghosts who wrote in his name under the table).

Stempel's choice tales and supporting quotes come from Nunnally Johnson, Philip Dunne, Lamar Trotti, and to a lesser extent, George Seaton, who were the lynchpins of Twentieth Century-Fox. Every author should be pardoned his favorites; and Stempel did do long, valuable oral histories with Dunne and Johnson. But it is something of a reach to echo Philip Dunne, with his obvious bias, that Fox was "the studio of the writer." It would be unfair to counter that Fox was more "the studio of the middlebrow writer"—no matter the best work of Johnson, Dunne, and Trotti (usually adaptations). But that is probably closer to the mark.

It is a mystery to me how Stempel could be so wrongheaded about his own good idea for a book. He squanders space on the Capra-Riskin equation, on the Mankiewicz-Welles controversy, on Preston Sturges's rise to reknown, etc.—all scrutinized at greater length elsewhere, in well-known books—adding little in the way of fresh detail, and putting only a modest spin on recycled material. The vast army of no-name screenwriters, the faceless journeymen (and -women), are neglected. The European invasion (and influence) is skipped. There is little differentiation between types of writers or backgounds or conditions. Animation writers receive all of two pages of comment!

While there are plenty of anecdotes culled from oral histories and memoirs, in general they provide entertaining moments and serve no underlying serious purpose. There are surprisingly few cited examples (of good or bad writing) from scripts or dialogue. Stempel offers scant discussion of how form and terms and sophistication evolved, of the pros and cons of genres, of the chemistry between fine directors and their long-partnered writers, of whether a script might be considered (as John Huston

wrote in his autobiography) in and of itself a valid form of literature.

Stempel makes the point, rather boastfully, that in his book there is not much of the lifestyle or storm-and-stress of the screenwriting community. Nothing of those merry cross-country train rides, the living (or office) arrangements, the literary salon at Salka Viertel's or the writer's table at MGM, the country clubs and polo matches, the boozing and partying and selling of one's soul. The flesh-and-blood tidbits he does give us are chosen selectively and without much amplification. Stempel tell us that Jeanie Macpherson, one of Cecil B. DeMille's corps, "had herself arrested and spent three days in a Detroit jail" in order to write *Manslaughter* in 1922. He notes, without further comment, "She later told friends she had tried to escape, but was caught." Stempel might have added that Macpherson was on DeMille's payroll seemingly forever because she served more amorous purposes. The director George Cukor, a great admirer of writers (they were urged to be present while he filmed, and characteristically he adhered to every comma in their scripts) once stated that certain of the famous "lady writers"—Macpherson, June Mathis, Frances Marion—had in common the fact that they absolutely could not write. The writers who could not write!—they should be part of a history of Hollywood scriptwriting as well.

Stempel's book reaches a kind of climax in the chapters about the Writers Guild, the Communist Party in Hollywood and the ramifications of the blacklist. Only here he is quite dependent on the Schwartz book, the Larry Ceplair-Steven Englund account of the Hollywood political battlefield (*The Inquisition in Hollywood*) and Victor Navasky's *Naming Names*. Stempel adds nothing but his own ingenuous viewpoint to his condensation of these excellent sources. The black market of the blacklist, he argues, "helped in a small but important way to destroy the studio system." (!) Ironically, he opines, Budd Schulberg wrote "the best screenplay to come out of the HUAC investigations by a screenwriter who testified," namely *On the Waterfront*. (!!)

The last 60 pages of the book devolves into a who's who of contemporary screenwriting and is pretty much a throw-away. The changed realities, the jump-cut storytelling, the contemporary marketplace—there is not much of this current history in *FrameWork*. Instead Stempel delves into personalities and random scripts, from Paddy Chayefsky to William Goldman to Oliver Stone. The *auteurs* who are in trendy bad odor (Steven Spielberg, George Lucas) are trotted out and belittled, especially if they have ever pretended authorship of their movies.

Don't get me wrong: I was rooting for this book. I read it standing up in a bookstore, until I was blessed with a review copy, after which I read it again, sitting down. (It is better standing up.) The author is sincere and passionate—and it may be that there was a decisive struggle between the publisher and the manner of presentation—which is a mess. On the back cover Philip Dunne calls the book, "The definitive work of the history of screenwriting." *FrameWork* may be useful as a primer, but definitive it is not. —PAT McGILLIGAN

Rachael Low, *Filmmaking in 1930s Britain*. London/Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1987. $27.95. Low has announced that this volume terminates her multi-volume history of the British film begun in 1948 and already considered a classic of film literature, a work which has viewed its subject both in its broadest sense, as an industry struggling to maintain itself in an international market, and in its narrowest, in which the products of that industry have been surveyed with critical perception. This volume, a chronicle of the then unsuspected beginnings of its best years since its origins, establishes the industrial context in which entrepreneurs like Alexander Korda and Michael Powell launched their careers and to which craftsmen like Alfred Hitchcock, Carol Reed, and David Lean so vitally contributed. Evident in this as in her previous volumes is Low's ease in moving between telling detail and overview as she interprets with imagination conjoined with a level head data winnowed from primary sources. She writes in that tradition of British scholarship where erudition has never doubted its obligation to be readable. The work ends with these lines: "Although it is sometimes possible, with a lot of talent, to make good films on modest budgets in general a constant level of high quality is expensive and needs to be sure of a big market not just for isolated films but as a mat-

wrote in his autobiography) in and of itself a valid form of literature.

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O'Connor, John E. and Martin A. Jackson, eds. *American History/American Film: Interpreting the Hollywood Image*, new expanded edition. New York: Ungar, 1988. This successful collection of essays by historians and mass communication scholars has enjoyed widespread adoption and acclaim, and has been reissued. The editors are active in the use of film as a pedagogical tool, having been coeditors of the journal *Film and History* and with the Historians Film Committee. The essays center on one movie that represents or illustrates something of historical importance, although what is considered important varies greatly from writer to writer. The hands doing the essays are familiar and veteran names, and some of the essays—June Sochen on *Way Down East*, Robert Sklar on *Red River*, Stuart Samuels on *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, among others—are quite good. Further, the essays are short enough and accessible enough for undergraduates to follow, and the films selected for examination well-known and still able to hold the attention of students. The one essay added to this "expanded" edition is on *Platoon*, but it does little to explain why that film became such a sensation in the supposedly bellicose eighties, or what *Platoon*, or other "Nam" films unmentioned (such as *The Deer Hunter* and *Full Metal Jacket*) contributed to the historical debate on the now safely distant Vietnam experience. But overall the collection is quite worthwhile, and when considered along with other works that take seriously the role of film in history and politics (Peter Rollin's *Hollywood as Historian* and John H. Lenihan's *Showdown* come to mind), keeps scholarly hope alive that the study of the interplay of popular art and temporal reality will continue. —JAMES COMBS

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Osborne, Robert. *Sixty Years of the Oscar: The Official History of the Academy Awards*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1989. $45.00. A Hollywood reporter reviews the bizarre history of this peculiar institution, with a totally straight face. The volume is mainly lists of nominations and winners, with quotes from winners and lusciously produced stills. —E.C.

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THE INTERNATIONAL FILM INDUSTRY
A Historical Dictionary

by Anthony Slide. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989. $55.00.

Slide has a prodigious and incredibly miscellaneous knowledge of the film world, and this fascinating grab-bag volume richly sets a lot of it forth. (He isn't perfect: he says that Pauline Kael's famous attack on Sarris and the auteur theory was originally published in *The New Yorker*, though it really appeared in *Film Quarterly*.) There are longish essays on the film industries of countries major and minor, and notes on countries like Moldavia that hardly have any at all. Production companies, archives, film schools and national "schools," studios, and even cities where film-making has flourished have their stories told. It is all rather unsystematic, but who cares? Slide ventures definitions of certain technical terms (*découpage*, Konicolor) but—perhaps wisely—avoids things like *mise-en-scène*. He tells us about the only feature made in the Lapp language; that "renter" is a British term for distributor, now obsolete; that the *Mining Review* was a hopelessly boring handout magazine from the British National Coal Board; and what happened in and to Danzig. Having Slide's book around is like having a wise if somewhat eccentric uncle who has spent his life in the film business. You never know when you might badly need to find out something weird that he just happens to know. —E.C.

Bergan, Ronald, and Robyn Karney. *The Holt Foreign Film Guide*. New York: Holt, 1988. $39.95. A British entry in the apparently interminable lists of popular viewing guides. This one has the virtue, like Sadoul, of including silent classics and films from relatively inconspicuous film-making countries, but the 2000 brief plot summaries are thin and unevocative at their best, sometimes downright erroneous, and almost never manage to convey anything of stylistic or formal interest about the films. Possibly better than no information at all, but not much better. —E.C.

Fernett, Gene. *American Film Studios: An Historical Encyclopedia*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1988. $35.00. Admittedly these 272 pages of text don't encompass every little enterprise, but the 66-plus entries ("RKO and Its Predecessors," "Rental Stages and 'Locations' ") cover the country, lots of circumstances, and many years. You discover that Nestor Films set up on the rudiments of Sunset Boulevard and Gower Street two years before Cecil B. DeMille arrived on the train. Crystal Studios filmed an early Pearl White in the Bronx. Kinemacolor sustained joint efforts in Long Island and Hollywood before it collapsed in 1913. Big companies get the most attention, although by now they've all warranted books of their own. Work by Ted and Leo Wharton in Ithaca, New York, inexplicably out-paginates Sam, Jack, Harry, and Albert Warner by a count of nine.

A good deal of the coverage is anecdotal and drawn from others' research, but Fernett, now deceased, did a good deal of digging on his own. Photos, production stills, lobby cards, and advertising cuts contribute visual support. Some exposition tends toward prolixity. From page 60: "In 1937, Walt Disney released his pioneering animated Technicolor feature *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the box-office bonanza which made it possible in 1938 for the Disneys to make a modest cash deposit on 51 choice acres in nearby Burbank, and to undertake drafting plans for the studio complex which today includes 77 buildings ranging over 144 acres along two sides of Riverside Drive, not far from the Warner Bros. studios." —JOHN FELL

Halliwell, Leslie. *Halliwell's Film Guide* (6th ed.). New York: Scribner's, 1989. $19.95 paper. Now some 16,000 entries. If you aren't overly fond of Halliwell's tastes, he also includes snippets from critics. Serials and Australian titles have been added. —E.C.

Halliwell, Leslie. *Halliwell's Filmgoers' and Video Viewers' Companion* (9th ed.). New York: Scribner's, 1989. $42.50. Basically a thumbnail-entry encyclopedia of performers, directors, writers, but some entries on films are also included (they are different from those for the same films in *Halliwell's Film Guide*, incidentally), together with items on recurrent devices (hot-air balloons) or settings (colleges, ships), or techniques (tinting). Some international coverage. —E.C.

Holland, Ted. *B Western Actors Encyclopedia: Facts, Photos and Filmographies for More than 250 Familiar Faces*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1989. $39.95. Career notes and credits. Includes "cowgirls."

Hubbard, Linda S., and Owen O'Donnell, eds. *Contemporary Theatre, Film, and Television* [continuation of *Who's Who in the Theatre*], Vol. 6. Detroit: Gale, 1988. $98.00. This volume adds almost 700 entries, bringing the total covered in the series to more than 3,800 (there is a cumulative index). A lit-

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Dmytryk is innocent of recent theory, and his preliminary discussions of abstract questions of film art thus have a curiously amber-preserved air. But, as with his discussions of film technique in the five short volumes collected as *On Filmmaking*, once he starts writing about particular filmic devices, especially of shooting and cutting, he is sound and sometimes brilliant; like any good director he has an instinctive astuteness about what would now be called "the positioning of the subject." His strictures against the sequence shot and in favor of "normal" Hollywood master-shot procedures are cogently worked out, and scattered through the book are notes on lenses and lighting, on working within the deficiencies of actors, on the management of filmic time, etc. Though he has been spending much of his time teaching, Dmytryk is not fond of film schools with their middle-class students hoping to become rich and famous rather than make powerful films; but they can still learn from him. —E.C.

Blacker, Irwin R. *The Elements of Screenwriting*. New York: Collier/Macmillan, 1988. $4.95 paper. Hardboiled Aristotelian advice by the old USC master teacher.

Burder, John. *The Technique of Editing 16mm Films* (5th ed.). Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1988. $25.95. A British text. A few technical terms are different from US practice, but useful to editors anywhere.
—E.C.

Bywater, Tim, and Thomas Sobchack. *Introduction to Film Criticism: Major Critical Approaches to Narrative Film*. White Plains, NY: Longman, 1989. As the product of a university where textbooks were tolerated only in fields like physics, I regard them as mind-numbing evils. Still, this survey of what goes on in journalistic, humanist, auteurist, genre, social-science, historical, and ideological/theoretical writing about film may be useful to neophytes, down even to a highschool level, who are crazy enough to want an overview of what film critics do. The prose in the volume will not set student pulses to racing dangerously, but the coverage is quite well informed, the glossary is accurate on the usual suspect terms (zoom, depth of field, etc.), and reading lists of books are ample though not exhaustive or entirely up to date. Guidelines are suggested for student papers in the different areas. —E.C.

Cook, Pam, ed. *The Cinema Book: A Complete Guide to Understanding the Movies*. New York: Pantheon, 1986. $19.95 paper. This is a puzzlingly schitzy book, produced in Britain, which has gone unnoticed in the US. It's part learned survey of structuralist and other theory (longish encyclopedia-style articles by people like Annette Kuhn and Sheila Johnston), part potted history (written by Kuhn with research by Paul Kerr, plus a piece on stars by James Donald and one on neorealism by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith), essays on genre by Christine Gledhill, Andy Medhurst, and Jane Root, interspersed collage-fashion with "sidebars"—miscellaneous notes on individual films, grouped by genre, director, stars, etc. The last third of the book gives plot synopses for the films in the British Film Institute's Study Extract collection, so the work is evidently intended at least in part as a textbook for students using these extracts. The format is large and floppy (three columns per page); lots of illustrations; scattery reading lists; index. —E.C.

Hauge, Michael. *Writing Screenplays That Sell*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988. $9.95. Provides the usual advice about story construction and characterization, but is unusually strong on the business aspects of finding an agent and securing a fair contract. Also offers avuncular advice: if you think the films that can be produced in Hollywood are crap, why do you want to learn how to write them? —E.C.

Malkiewicz, Kris. *Cinematography* (2nd ed.). New York: Prentice-Hall, 1989. $19.95 paper. Revision of a nicely organized and illustrated text; useful for introductory courses. —E.C.

Russo, John. *Making Movies.* New York: Dell, 1989. $9.95 paper. Russo was a boyhood friend of George Romero and producer of *Night of the Living Dead*; he knows the independent scuffling life from the inside and has entertaining and encouraging lessons to teach about it, interspersed with interviews with people like Romero, Lizzie Borden, Tobe Hooper, and Oliver Stone—much candid talk about what happens when independents encounter the established industry. Includes some rudimentary technical and business information, and some useful legal forms. Altogether, this book gives a better feel for the independent film-making world than most introductory texts, and fosters realism but not paralyzing paranoia. —E.C.

Schmidt, Rick. *Feature Filmmaking at Used-Car Prices: How to Write, Produce, Direct, Film, Edit, and Promote a Feature-Length Film for Less than $10,000.* New York: Penguin, 1989. $8.95 paper. Chatty but well-thought-through advice on the making of super-low-budget features, from an experienced practitioner who no longer needs to borrow from his daughter's piggy-bank. —E.C.

Swain, Dwight V. with Joye R. Swain. *Film Scriptwriting* (2nd ed.). Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1988. $22.95 paper. Gives considerable space to "fact films" as opposed to features, and includes hints about surviving story conferences. Excerpts from scripts in a variety of forms. —E.C.

Turner, Graeme. *Film as Social Practice.* New York: Routledge, 1988. $11.50 paper. A tidily written survey of film history and film thought, this volume is apparently intended mainly as a textbook—it even contains "suggestions for further work" at the end of each chapter. Spotty bibliography (text discusses Bazin at some length, but bibliography omits him—so does index, for that matter). Includes some good readings of recent films. —E.C.

Walter, Richard. *Screenwriting: The Art, Craft and Business of Film and Television Writing.* New York: NAL Penguin, 1988. $8.95 paperback. Walter has a brash, kick-in-the-pants style which can get tedious in large doses, but the special virtue of his book is closely connected to his basic attitude: recognize, he tells his UCLA students, that movies are about *violence*; go for the grabbers, since real life is tedious and boring; don't imagine that great characters can sustain a film without sound structure, or that single protagonists can be diffused into a group; don't worry about anything on the sound track except dialogue, and make that *shorter*, and so on. As Walter knows, all these handy rules are of course disprovable by anyone who has taken a couple of courses in film history, but that doesn't mean a working scriptwriter shouldn't know them; most decent films rely on them most of the time, and most writers spend most of their time writing no better than decent films. Walter also offers useful advice about the practicalities of the screenwriting trade: dealing with agents, writing on speculation, dealing with rejection (and critics). He even gets down to the mundane details that prevail in Hollywood: two brass brads in the holes in your script, not three, for instance. There are no brilliant new art-revolutionizing insights in this book, but it gives a good grounding in the realities of the screenwriter's life and can help aspirants avoid dumb mistakes. Lacks an index, unfortunately. —E.C.

Wiese, Michael. *Film & Video Marketing.* Stoneham, MA: Focal Press, 1989. $16.95. A successful producer-director tells all—dealing and marketing are, of course, far more important these days than the mere mechanics of movie-making. Contains a long, depressingly fascinating documentary account (via interviews) of Vestron's campaign for *Dirty Dancing.* —E.C.

Theory

OFFSCREEN: Women and Film in Italy

Edited by Giuliana Bruno and Maria Nadotti. London and New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall, 1988. $37.50 cloth, $16.95 paper

This anthology of writings on film by Italian feminists is a difficult book to review. As a feminist film scholar, I am thrilled that feminist work outside of the Anglo-American and French contexts is finally being translated and published. However, as one almost overwhelmed by the number of good books and articles currently available on feminist film theory and history, I find some are less indispensable than others. Unfortunately, in most respects, *Offscreen* is dispensable.

The book is composed of essays on the intersection of the women's movement and film in Italy, images of women in Italian and American film, women film-makers in Italy, and women and language. Many of the essays originated in a seminar, "Italian and American directions: women's film theory and practice," held in New York in 1984. Although helpful contextual information has been added by editors Bruno and Nadotti, most of the essays read as if they were still "working papers" rather than carefully thought-through argumentations. I would not want to force closure on work that stresses the importance of process to women's experience and feminist theory, but it is hard to see

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how this book can compete either in the marketplace or in feminism's historical legacy with some of the best feminist film theory and analysis (i.e., work of Doane, Modleski, de Lauretis, Gledhill, etc.) recently published. For example, Patrizia Violi's piece "Language and the Female Subject," which discusses the feminine "position" within language, is lucid, but lacks the depth of argumentation that is so evident in de Lauretis's work or that of Kaja Silverman or Jacqueline Rose on the same subject. Giovanna Grignaffini's "Female Identity and Italian Cinema of the 1950s" is also disappointingly superficial, ending with a provocative question—"did the particular image of the Italian female body in the 1950s . . . work as a 'mirror stage' for the female spectators of the time?"—that one feels should have been central to the whole piece. Lea Melandri's essay on the rediscovered writer Sibilla Aleramo, "Ecstasy, Coldness, and the Sadness which is Freedom," is eloquently argued, but does not fit into this collection about film. I also had a problem with Lucilla Albano's essay on *The Lady from Shanghai* because, although it offers an interesting analysis of the film, it does not explicitly address issues of *feminist* analysis.

The most interesting and valuable aspect of this book is its contextualization of Italian feminist theory and practice within the history of the women's movement and the history of other liberating, political struggles in Italy during the late 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. All of the essays by Giuliana Bruno and Maria Nadotti engage these issues with passion and with constant attention to the similarities and differences between the Italian feminist context and the Anglo-American feminist context. Their description of how Italian feminist film theory and practice was nurtured out of the "150 Hours Courses" is fascinating. These were government-sponsored courses first developed for factory workers and later for women at home and retirees to supplement their inadequate primary and secondary educational experiences. Significantly, the right to these courses was won from the government by workers' organizations, and for the women involved became an extended analysis of both their class and sexual difference. It was here that many women, both students and teachers, found film as a tool of communication for expressing such unprecedented self-analysis of their role in patriarchal culture. The essays discussing this history should be illuminating for any scholar trying to theorize the relations between feminism and other political struggles and/or between film theory/practice and larger, cultural movements. I wish that all of *Offscreen* had been so enlightening and valuable.

—MARY DESJARDINS

PERSPECTIVES ON PORNOGRAPHY
Sexuality in Film and Literature

Edited by Gary Day and Clive Bloom. New York: St. Martin's, 1988. $35.00.

Someday someone ought to compile a catalogue of the contradictory statements that have been generated about pornography. The result would be amusing and sad—a tribute to our ability to confuse ourselves. Even in the limited form of the essay—as opposed to the exhaustive multi-volume treatment of the presidential commission where any logic or coherence seems out of the question—contradictions abound in a morass of conflicting sexual, political, and moral dispositions: pornography is pleasure, pornography is power; pornography liberates, pornography degrades; pornography is emblematic of patriarchal power and abuse; pornography is theory—not real, abstract—and pornography is too real, it kills.

The present volume does nothing to dispel this profusion of contradictory approaches, but it is willing to assume that its subject is not necessarily one or the other of these poles—that it can be and has been all these things to different people at different times. Like all anthologies, even those united like this one by a general left-leaning and feminist perspective, *Perspectives on Pornography* suffers from diffuseness. Its "perspectives" are multiple, ranging from Marxism, psychoanalysis, and Foucault to a feminist attack on "gaze theory." Its objects of scrutiny include the Meese Commission in relation to the Dada bachelor machines, romance fiction as "porn for women," female sexuality in the work of Angela Carter, and historical reasons for the rise of Grove Press. The editors tell us that the essays "dialogue" with one another, which isn't quite true. A better description would be fortuitious occasional overlaps in the midst of wild divergences.

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And yet for all its limitations, this is an exceedingly useful volume in its willingness to open the topic up to the same kind of scrutiny given other forms of popular representation. It thus performs the important function of defusing what have been enormous impediments to real inquiry in the past: the temptation to view pornography as either the source or the quintessential symptom of all our ills. This is certainly the only study to deal historically and specifically with the subject of film pornography (cf. Anthony Crabbe's *Feature Length Sex Films*). Echoed in several of the essays are the following novel insights: that there is continuity between pornography and other forms of representation (rather than placing pornography beyond the pale); that pornography has a specific history tied up with other discourses of sexuality; that high art/low art distinctions are no longer relevant as ways of designating acceptable pornography (redubbed eroticism) and unacceptable (the same old scapegoat). Very few of the essays develop their ideas very far, the writing is often less than elegant, and the section that claims to offer individual critical analyses doesn't speak much to the other sections on history and theory. Yet if one is not looking for the definitive last word on the subject but rather for a new beginning of the historical and theoretically engaged analysis of that most elusive of "hard-core" objects, this volume is an excellent start.

—LINDA WILLIAMS

FILM AND THE ARTS IN SYMBIOSIS

Gary R. Edgerton, ed. New York: Greenwood, 1988. $55.00.

"The Arts" are painting, photography, graphic arts, literature, theater, classical music, popular music, radio, television, video art, and new media: subscription television, cable television, video discs, videocassettes. Problems attending such an anthology are considerable, yet sections are so good one wishes it maintained a greater consistency throughout. Several chapters block out cut-and-dried historical surveys in which chronology implies cause, but the book's outstanding sections essay formal or functional connections.

In "Film and Classical Music," Royal Brown's juxtapositions of particular images and specific music foreground conjoint effort. During *The Black Cat*, Karloff turns on an art deco radio which sneaks Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* onto a sound track. "But at this same moment, a very dramatic incident takes place—the ailurophoic Lugosi kills a cat, which seems to pass its soul on to the heroine—so that the Schubert music, which plays at quite a loud volume, imperceptibly leaves the diegesis to provide affective backing." (178) *King Kong* boasts several references. The hefty protagonist has a personal theme. "Interestingly, these same three notes are also subtly built into the film's love theme; although probably done either unconsciously or ironically by Steiner, the inclusion of Kong's motif in the love theme says a lot about the mythic parallel between the Jack Driscoll-Ann Darrow couple and the man-monster mythology . . ." (200) Pursuing the historical overview, Brown traces a series of film/music variations that mark both stylistic shifts (increasing dissonance and fragmentation by the forties) and technological innovation: multi-track recording, synthesizers, digital processors. Symbiosis with a vengeance.

When a relationship is less collaborative than cannibalistic, exposition turns more toward trivial pursuit. What novel/play was made into what film with what results? Where relationships group together as if around a board of directors table, "symbiosis" acquires the look of adjacent columns in an account book. When film, radio, and television compete for the consumer dollar at different points in time, who emerges top dog? In several of these instances, a reader may long for more detail. There *have* been catalytic forces like MCA and Congress which affected both media form and media content. In these aging eighties, it seems almost outlandish to recall an FCC that once regarded American airwaves as public property, their licensed usage a public trust. "Film and Popular Music" traces development in the phonograph industry, noting current alliances with the film studios, but there's no mention of corruption and cooked books on either side—a most effective form of symbiosis.

"Theater" is far more internationally disposed than other parts. Some sections deal in greater or less degree with formal likenesses (literature, video art). "Painting" concentrates on classification (but where is costume design? where *mise-en-scène*?). "Photography" and "Graphic Arts" (i.e., comics and animation)

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trace generally familiar popular-culture history, but where are lenses, emulsions, computer-generated graphics, object animation? Theory cleaves to Kracauer, Panofsky, and Arnheim with the exception of Edward Small's "Film and Video Art." He argues that since Metz's *grande syntagmatique* has been applied both to film and video, the system is media-specific and suggests an intrinsic bonding. (319) Small's examples encompass neither experimental film nor video art and his position is certainly subject to dispute, but it does remind a reader that theoretical superstructures may serve the examination of media relationships quite as usefully as straightahead history.

Edgerton's introduction concisely traces a cultural survey of American society as it nurtured popular forms, sometimes at the expense of other traditions, but precious little of this material is elabotated thereafter. What does the book's title tell us? An art is always a medium; when is a medium an art? *Film and the Arts in Symbiosis* challenges us to produce far more refined, coherent work, no small feat in itself.

—JOHN FELL

Bradbury, Malcolm. *My Strange Quest for Mensonge*. New York: Penguin/Viking, 1987. $6.95 paper. A sly British spoof of Deconstruction, focusing despite the obvious theoretical difficulties on the ultimate non-auteur, one Henri Mensonge, and his apocryphal (or is it?) work, *La Fornication comme acte culturel*. Wickedly mock-erudite (and under that, actually erudite), complete with (partly) mock Bibliography, and a delicious ear for French thought and style: the revenge of the Anglo-Saxon mind.

—E.C.

Kostelanetz, Richard, ed. *Esthetics Contemporary*, rev. ed. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989. $29.95. While few of the contributors to this huge collection are known in the film world (Steve Reich, Yvonne Rainer, Carolee Schneeman, Paul Sharits, Peter Wollen), its survey of recent esthetic thought, especially as related to avant-garde work, might well be studied by film people as a means of gaining a wider perspective on the particular paths taken by recent film theory. —E.C.

Sanjines, Jorge, and the Ukamau Group. *Theory & Practice of a Cinema with the People*. (Art on the Line #6) Curbstone Press, 321 Jackson Street, Willimantic, CT 06226, 1988. $4.00 paper. Excerpts from the 1979 Spanish edition—a collection of essays and interviews by the Bolivian film-maker raising questions about indigenous revolutionary filmmaking as he practiced it and gradually reformulated it in closer collaboration with its subjects. —E.C.

Miscellaneous

FAST FADE
David Puttnam, Columbia Pictures, and the Battle for Hollywood

By Andrew Yule. New York: Delacorte, 1989. $19.95

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Edgerton's introduction concisely traces a cultural survey of American society as it nurtured popular forms, sometimes at the expense of other traditions, but precious little of this material is elabotated thereafter. What does the book's title tell us? An art is always a medium; when is a medium an art? *Film and the Arts in Symbiosis* challenges us to produce far more refined, coherent work, no small feat in itself.

—JOHN FELL

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grave doubts were now setting in''), paragraph structure (a quotation on page 30 could be Puttnam describing Director Alan Parker or the reverse), stray facts (B-52s in World War II? Libby Holman rather than Fanny Brice a relative of producer and Puttnam-nemesis Ray Stark?), and cryptic asides (director Bill Forsyth's ''tendency toward stubbornness'' while shooting the Puttnam-produced *Local Hero*). The book's index omits the companies in Puttnam's career (Goodtimes, Goldcrest, Casablanca Records & Filmworks, Enigma, even Columbia). In addition, despite his affection for Forsythe's flop, *Housekeeping* (which Puttnam rescued after Diane Keaton and Cannon Films abandoned it), Yule can't suppress a certain distaste for even artistically meritorious box-office failures. As a result, his closing pages simplistically heap all the blame for the Columbia snafu on Puttnam. Still, *Fast Fade* effectively assembles multiple perspectives on the disheartening affair and (like David McClintick's *Indecent Exposure* and Steven Bach's *Final Cut*) does double duty as both road map and survival kit.

Puttnam's trajectory began in working-class England, with stints as an ad executive and a photographer's agent in London during the Swinging 60s. Yule suggests that his eventual revulsion at this ''Jack the Lad'' phase of his life helped fuel a desire to make films with the social consciousness he had admired as a boy in pictures by Stanley Kramer, Elia Kazan, and Fred Zinnemann. Beginning with modest ventures, Puttnam first tasted breakthrough commercial success as co-producer of Parker's *Midnight*. Later, after clashes with stars, directors, and financiers on such projects as *Agatha*, *Foxes*, and *Lisztomania*, he initiated *Chariots of Fire*, won heavy clout from its unexpected success, then solidified his position as a backer of risky but successful dramatic projects with *The Killing Fields*. Along the way, several now-prominent directors (Parker, Adrian Lyne, Ridley Scott, Roland Joffe, Michael Apted) and writers (Andrew Birkin, Ray Connolly, Bruce Robinson) made their feature debuts under his aegis.

As Yule points out, many contend that this man of professedly noble beliefs is actually just an expert self-publicist whose adroit manipulation of the British press is principally responsible for painting his favored self-portrait: Patron-Creator of Serious Cinematic Art (the product of Lofty Themes). Justifiably guilt-stricken over the glitzed-up xenophobia of the odious *Midnight Express*, Puttnam repudiated the picture yet, in Yule's account, absolves himself of real accountability by suggesting that he had somehow been ''ripped off.'' Nevertheless, he did turn away from this more commercial approach towards what he himself has called, both defensively and defiantly, his ''middle-class humanism.''

However, *Fast Fade* keeps highlighting persistent, unresolved contradictions in Puttnam's character and activities. While touting collaboration and slating the *auteur* theory, he admits to being a control freak who feels frustrated when ''his'' directors dig in their heels and take command. As Bruce Robinson puts it, ''He's a wonderful uncle until he doesn't want you around anymore.'' Yet Robinson adds, ''Would I work with him again? Like—tomorrow! Why? Because he's a *brilliant* fucking film producer!'' Again and again, people Puttnam has fostered evoke Good David/Bad David. Hugh Hudson fiercely attacks him for abandoning situations when they become difficult (*Agatha*, Hudson's own *Greystoke*, the floundering English company Goldcrest, even Columbia) yet professes to retain strong affection for him. Parker, his ''best friend,'' clobbers him for everything from pomposity to secret but self-lacerating enjoyment of Hollywood perks. Others finger (and Puttnam hesitantly acknowledges) a pattern of occasional half-truth-telling, even outright lying, in his comments and business dealings sharply at odds with his high-mindedness.

Contradictions certainly beset him at Columbia. Despite his excitement over the extraordinary opportunity to shape a whole program of major studio films, Puttnam rendered himself an instant lame duck by publicly placing a three-year limit on his term as production chief. Refusing to temper his harsh comments about Hollywood in numerous interviews and speeches, he rashly baited power-brokers and stars. Yule traces what now appears his inevitable fall, stating acidly (as many others also did at the time) that, for all of his idealism, he sold out for and left town with a $3 million golden parachute while the inevitable night-of-the-long-knives that followed eliminated many who had pinned their creative hopes on him.

Many have asked: Could Puttnam have succeeded at Columbia if only he had shut up? And many, some wistfully, still say yes, but this seems deluded. Even if he'd talked less than a Trappist, Puttnam was bound to crash head-on into the ethos of 1980s Hollywood, which worships only thing only: the Great God Nine-Figure-Gross. Thus, what he was trying to do may have been impossible under any circumstances. (Current propaganda declares that the Michael Eisner/Jeff Katzenburg team at Disney is carrying out Puttnam's agenda, but this notion is absurd, given the untouched-by-human-hands quality of nearly all their recent hits, which truly deserve the ordinarily offensive term "product.") If Yule is accurate, Puttnam's blunders and faults certainly contributed to his failure at Columbia and hot air does indeed distend many of his pronouncements. But his personal production record is by no means negligible and his analyses of Hollywood's corruption remain acute. Regardless of history's verdict, his year at Columbia does represent the first true effort ever made to change the rules of the game from inside the corridors of genuine power. —MICHAEL DEMPSEY

Austin, Bruce A., ed. *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics, and Law*, vol. 4. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988. $39.50. Hard information, some of it surprising (the art film audience differs from the mainline film audience not in education or age but solely in being less likely to be married, for instance). Two pieces bear on the vexed condition of the Canadian film industry. —E.C.

Buss, Robin. *The French Through Their Films*. New York: Ungar, 1988. $18.95. Buss has some of Jim Hillier's easy British familiarity with French culture, and he has interesting things to say about French films' curious concentration on the isolated couple and similar psychosocial themes. He provides some quick information on the commercial history of the French film, and essays on class, geography (particularly urban/rural), and war as aspects of film stories. About half the book is made up of filmographies focusing on contemporary comments about the films treated in the book, which offer intriguing evidence of what Buss calls the multiple contradictions of French society. Not a brilliant book, but offers some stimulation to fans of French cinema. —E.C.

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University Press, 1989. $22.95. Two cool-headed lawyers from the Earl Warren Legal Institute at Berkeley examine the work of four major recent commissions (two American, one British, one Canadian). While the treatment is general rather than focused on film, readers will find it a careful and rational account of Anglo-Saxon legal thinking on this highly emotional subject. The treatment given to shoddy research and fuzzy thinking is magisterial without resorting to denigration, so all sides should find the book useful. Special issues connected with child pornography are dealt with extensively, and the authors also offer some constructive thoughts on the social control of pornography in an age when do-it-yourself video makes porn production (like consumption) potentially universal and virtually unpoliceable.

—E.C.

Halliwell, Leslie. *The Dead That Walk*. New York: Continuum, 1988. $18.95. An aimless but generally genial rehashing of the adventures of Dracula, Frankenstein, the Mummy, "and the assorted undead," in film and print, with emphasis on Universal and Hammer. Some fun and nostalgia value, in between the plot synopses and the padding (lengthy extracts from Stoker, Shelley, etc.).

—DON WILLIS

Harwell, Richard, ed. Gone with the Wind *as Book and Film*. New York: Paragon House, 1987. $18.95 paper. *Caveat emptor*—unless you happen to be an aficionado of trivia about *GWTW* books. Production stills and studio handouts, accounts of the Atlanta set, Max Steiner's score, the casting of Scarlet take up 60 of the books's 251 pages. (The rest is about the book, not the film.) None of these—not even the *Daily Worker*'s attack, duly included in the name of pluralism—is as much fun as Leslie Fiedler's afterword, which makes the rest look bewildering. *GWTW* mania, a harmless eccentricity, remains inexplicable. Frankly—this is too good a chance to miss—I don't give a damn. —PAUL THOMAS

Hepburn, Katharine. *The Making of* The African Queen. New York: New American Library, 1987. $8.95 paper. Actress's-eye view of film-making with John Huston.

Leyda, Jay, ed., trans. by Alan Y. Upchurch, et al. *Eisenstein 2: A Premature Celebration of Eisenstein's Centenary*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1985; US distributor, Ungar, NY. $7.95 paper. Some tidbits of hitherto unpublished Eisenstein: his combat with Proletcult after *Strike*; letters to and from Esther Shub and others.

Schechter, Harold. *Deviant: The Shocking True Story of the Original "Psycho." New York: Simon & Schuster, Pocket Books, 1989. $3.95 paper.* In this grisly, wonderful book, Harold Schechter—whose last work was *The Bosom Serpent*, a first-class study of the folklore of horror, and who yields to no one,

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not even Joe Bob Briggs, in the enlightened and enthusiastic appreciation of schlock—tells the life story of Eddie Gein (pronounced, as Schechter cheerfully notes, "with a long *e*, as in *fiend*"), the "Mad Butcher of Plainfield" whose murderous, ghoulish, and in a horrible way artistic perversions (such as dancing in the moonlight, dressed in the "skin vests" and genitals he cut from dead women; eating his daily pork and beans from a cranium; and skinning heads so that he could wear the carefully oiled faces) inspired Robert Bloch's *Psycho* and the movie Hitchcock made from it, as well as Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Anyone seriously interested in either of those movies will find this book essential, not only as a scrupulously researched and complexly sympathetic biography of the craziest killer in American history—and *his* mother—but also as a fascinating account of the genesis of Gein folklore, from the sick jokes called "Geiners" ("Why did they have to keep the heat on in Ed Gein's house?" "So the furniture wouldn't get goose bumps.") to the slasher called Norman Bates. —BRUCE KAWIN

Schrader, Paul. *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1988. $11.95. Reprint of 1972 University of California Press ed.

Shaw, Sam, and Norman Rosten. *Marilyn among friends*. New York: Henry Holt, 1988. $24.95. The photos (by Shaw) are gorgeous; the reminiscences by Rosten, a family friend, and a poet, are uniquely low-key and thus impressive. One of the photos shows Marilyn enthusiastically hugging a large tree, and Rosten quotes a poem she wrote for him that uses tree imagery; for some reason, when Marilyn uses the perfectly acceptable term "limb" he proposes rewriting it to "branch," but other than that, he treats the woman with simple friendly esteem. —E.C.

Sinclair, Marianne. *Hollywood Lolitas: The Nymphet Syndrome in the Movies*. New York: Holt, 1989. $14.95 paper. This is at least as much biography of nymphet stars (from Lillian Gish onward) as it is a discussion of their films and the imagery involved. Sinclair takes a tone of judicious outrage at the sexual exploitation of the very young (often at the instigation of their mothers, it seems) but there's something a little sniggery about her project all the same, and her discussion of the "mythology" allegedly involved is facile. —E.C.

Slide, Anthony, ed. *The Picture Dancing on a Screen: Poetry of the Cinema: An Anthology*. Vestal Press, PO Box 97, Vestal, NY 13851, 1988. The indefatigable Slide has unearthed poems by a strange variety of people, including Stuart Kaminsky, Charles Higham, Norman Rosten, Preston Sturges, and John Updike, along with a host of relative unknowns. Despite the valiance (and gallantry) of the poets, something there is about film that doesn't love a poem—or is it vice versa? —E.C.

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Wajda, Andrzej. *Double Vision: My Life in Film.* New York: Holt, 1989. $19.95 paper. Wajda is not always perfectly served by his translator (Rose Medina), who refers to the sewers of *Kanal* as "canals," but the text reads smoothly enough. It is surprisingly rare for a major film-maker to reflect at length and in detail on the creative process; most books on direction are prepared by people on the sidelines or of no particular distinction. With this little book Wajda joins the company of Bresson, Kozintzev, Dmytryk, and a handful of others: film-makers trying to sort out their experiences for themselves as well as for interested beginners or colleagues. (Wajda says that he is writing, thirty-odd years later, for the young man he was when he shot *Ashes and Diamonds.*) The book is organized informally, as a series of commentaries on various aspects of film-making (script, the proper lighting of eyes, costuming, photographic style, etc.) and in most chapters there are little anecdotes; even in the didactic frame of a book, Wajda is a story-teller, and his characteristic wryness—sometimes with a hint of Polish tragedy—keeps coming through. This is a document of the film-maker as human being, as witness, as survivor (narrowly), as one of the creative forces of our time. —E.C.

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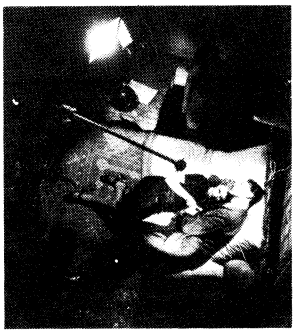

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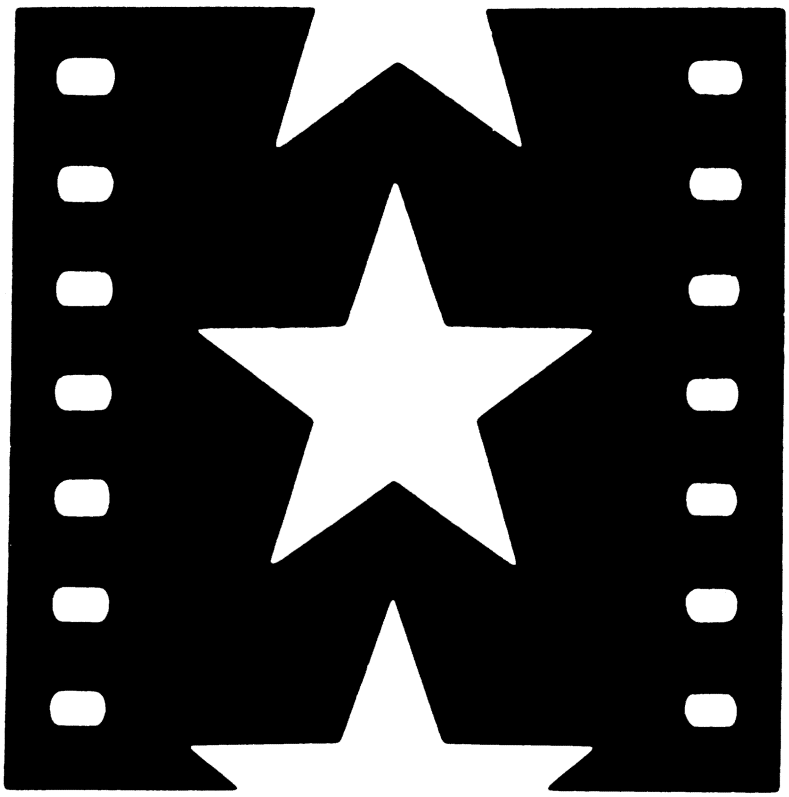

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